



Louisa May Alcott

Author **Louisa May Alcott** / Illustrations **Ángeles Ruiz** / 96 pages / Book Series **Classic Tales**

Objectives

- To encourage students to **re-read a genre they may have read** or have had read to them as young children.
- To introduce students to fables and encourage them to **notice and discuss the moral of each story**.
- To build students' confidence in **understanding stories** written in English.
- To provide students with **new lexical items within the context** of the story.

Word bank

Key vocabulary

Botanical and biological terms: Blossom, Bud, Daisy, Harebells, Lily, Milkweed, Moss / Mossy, Primrose, Root, Sea-weed, Seed, Vine, Violet, Firefly, Lark, Mole, Worm, Breeze, Dew, Frost, Icicle, Mist, Snowflake, Sunbeam, Bloom, Melt, Shriveled up

Magical terms: Wand, Spell, Elf / Elves

Key structures

Comparative structures - e.g. as brown as an autumn leaf; his heart is as hard as his own icy land

Superlative structures - e.g. "So let me, the weakest of your subjects, go to him, trusting in the love that I know lies hidden in even the coldest heart." "I will take only a wreath of our prettiest flowers"

Tips and ideas

Before reading

- Ask your students if they like writing and whether they have ever written anything, a poem or a story, themselves. Tell them that Louisa May Alcott was 16 when she wrote these tales. Who do they think she wrote them for? Why do they imagine she did it?
- Ask groups of students to build vocabulary banks of lexis referring to flowers and other natural lexical sets (plants, animals, weather), in preparation for the language used in the stories. This might be an interesting and valuable exercise to do bilingually.
- Encourage creative, higher level thinking skills by getting students to predict the theme of each story from its title.

During reading

- The images used throughout the fables are very vivid and colourful. Talk about how students "see" the scenes - maybe encourage them to draw each scene as it unfolds so that they have a mini comic-style story-board of each tale.
- Use these storyboards to check students' understanding of the plot, by asking them to summarise what is going on in each square.

- Work on reading the Fairy poems aloud. Get your students to decide on how to chunk the lines - explain that each chunk of language should have some meaning. Look at the rhyming words and make sure everybody knows what they should sound like.
- Record the poems - get groups to use an iPad to practise reading the poem, and when they are happy with the sound of it, record the definitive version.

After reading

- Return to your original questions about Alcott's reasons behind writing these tales, now that you have read them as a class. Why do your students think she chose this genre? Would they have liked a friend to write a tale for them when they were little?
- Ask students to look at the story-board they have sketched as they read the tales. Using the lexical sets brainstormed and added to during the reading, encourage them to write up a scene of their choice.
- Ask students to share their scenes with each other - have they described similar parts? Have they chosen the same language? Where possible, get them to team up with other students and encourage them to retell the stories together.

Teacher support activities

Great Games: Pass the Parcel

Prepare one parcel to play with in class, then ask groups to prepare other parcels to play with at a later date. A prepared parcel consists of a lot of layers of paper, each with a forfeit, and maybe a sweet or tiny gift, in each layer, and a slightly more substantial gift (a rubber or a chewing gum) in the centre.

Get the students to stand in a big circle around the class - you don't need to move the furniture, but make sure they are standing more or less next to each other around the walls. Play some music and, while the music plays, the parcel should be handed (not thrown!) from student to student, in a clockwise direction. When the music stops, the student holding the parcel takes off one layer of paper and fulfils the forfeit.

Forfeits can include singing songs, counting backwards, spelling tricky words, answering general knowledge or revision questions, dancing, jumping, hopping blindfolded or backwards, etc. Once you have played this typical party game once, get the students to organise their own one (but maybe check their forfeits first!).

CLIL Link: Social Science and Literature

- Write the names of Lewis Carroll and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on the board and ask your class if they ring a bell. Now add "Cottingley fairies" and tell groups they have 8 minutes to search for as much information as possible on the three topics. Mix members of the groups to feed back to each other and share what they have found - whilst trying to answer the question "What connects these three topics?"
- As they read the Flower Fables, did your students ever believe in the magical creatures depicted in the tales? Why do they think so many people believed the stories and photographs of fairies and spirits made popular by these two writers, as well as many other intellectual people?
- Lead the discussion towards Fake News, by, for example, showing this short video from learnenglishteens: <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/video-zone/five-ways-spot-fake-news>. Has society changed in its eagerness to believe incredible news items?
- Get groups to investigate *deepfake* and report back to each other on the most surprising stories they find. Hold a reflective plenary to discuss (in whatever language the students are most comfortable in) how they feel about what they've discovered.

English Theatre: Pay It Forward

In 2000, the film "Pay It Forward" (*Cadena de favores*) was released to mixed reviews. The message is the same as the one behind Alcott's fables; that helping others is good for everyone. Show the trailer for the film to get the students thinking about "real life" chains of favours.

Put the students into small groups of 5 or 6 and ask them to think of an initial scenario - they have 5 minutes. For example, "Your little sister has always wanted a dog and you see an advert for a refuge for homeless dogs."

They write down their scenario on a slip of paper and pass it on to the next group. Groups have 5 minutes to decide how to continue the chain, then they write their idea onto the slip of paper and pass it on again.

When the chain has been added to 2 or 3 more times, the last group to receive each slip act out the whole story (mime, narrated mime, mini role-play) to the rest of the class. Hold a short reflective plenary to discuss how the chains evolved.

