



# Joseph Jacobs

Author **Joseph Jacobs** / Illustrations **Sonja Wimmer** / 96 pages / Book Series **Classic Tales**

## Objectives

---

- To present a selection of **tales from another culture**.
- To introduce readers to a variety of **culturally-specific lexis and characters**.
- To build students' confidence in **understanding stories written in English**.
- To encourage students to **notice loan words and cognates**.

## Word bank

---

### Key vocabulary

**Mythical beings:** giant, imp, sheehogue, monster, beast, Devil

**Words with different meanings:** bank, hide, club, crow, knot (pronunciation!)

### Key structures

There was once... / There were once... - different ways to begin a tale, rather than "Once upon a time..."

Comparatives: "He had as many cows and sheep as his heart desired."

## Tips and ideas

---

### Before reading

- Ask your students if they can think of any words which are very similar in Spanish and English. Do they both have Greek or Latin roots? Are they a certain sort of word? (e.g. more formal? more scientific?)
- Introduce the idea of Loan Words with words from English used in Spanish (for example: shopping, parking, football, influencer, brunch, etc...). Do some dictionary work by asking students to open a page at random and find all the loan words - and report back.

### During reading

- As there are four different Celtic tales in this collection, you could work as a class to predict what the tale might be about from their titles.
- Divide the tales up amongst the class, so that small groups read one tale and work through the activities together. Be on hand to answer any questions and to ask direct concept-checking questions.
- Hold a plenary session where each tale is discussed - both by the original readers and by the rest of the class who have heard about it in the reformed group. You could ask students to identify similar characteristics, characters or plot lines.

### After reading

- Think about ways that the text could be simplified - if your students had to tell the story to a 5-year-old or to their granny or to an alien, would they tell it in the same way?
- Look at the original text and compare it to the abridged version - what sort of changes have been made?  
"There were more there playing tricks, and more making fun and laughing, for such a feast as there was that day had not been in France for twenty years, because the old king had no children alive but only the one daughter, and she was to be married to the son of another king that night."  
**Abridged version:** Everybody was playing and dancing, and having fun and laughing, and there hadn't been a feast like this in France for twenty years, because the old king had only one daughter, and that night she was going to be married to the son of another king.
- Ask students to look at the activities relating to the lexis - concrete items, Irish loan words and nonsense, invented terms. What was the students' reaction to encountering these words in the stories? Did the use of "Sheehogue" rather than "naughty fairy" give a more exotic flavour to the tale?

# Teacher support activities

## Great Games: Mastermind

This is a whole-class board game, in the style of Hangman, but students have to think of whole words rather than letters, so it is very useful for revision!

Choose a word from one of the stories – four or five-letter words are good – and draw the corresponding number of stars at the top of the board. Tell the class they have to call out four-letter words – they can scan the text to find words if they want – and you will give them clues to discover your mystery word.

If the word they suggest has the same letter as your word, in the same place, you will give them a tick (✓). If the word they suggest has the same letter as your word, in a different place, you will give them a cross (X). If the word they suggest doesn't have any of the same letters as your word, you will draw a line (□).

e.g. ★ ★ ★ ★ (the word you have chosen is "hide")

club    □ □ □ □

down    X □ □ □

idea    X X X □

rath    □ □ □ X

hill    ✓ ✓ □ □

hide    ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

## CLIL Link: Literary Genres

Joseph Jacobs said of his collections that "of the eighty-seven tales contained in my two volumes, thirty-eight are Märchen proper (magic tales with fairies, giants, dragons and mermaids), ten sagas (Nordic or Germanic tales) or legends (stories about people which seem to be based on history), nineteen drolls (short theatrical comedies), four cumulative stories (simple stories where the action and language is repeated and built on, like a tongue twister or a chain story), six beast tales (fables where animals speak like humans), and ten nonsense stories (a mixture of oral folk traditions, including the nursery rhymes of Mother Goose, and intellectual parodies and satire)."

- Read the extract from the biographical notes to your class.

- Give each group a story-type and ask them to investigate it.

Märchen

cumulative stories

sagas

beast tales

legends

nonsense stories

drolls

- Can they find an example? Where is it from? When was it written? Who are the main characters? What is the story-line? Does it have a happy ending?
- Groups describe the story-type they have been investigating and the class votes on the one they like best.

## English Theatre: Make the story our own

- As a whole class, decide on one of the stories from the collection to work on and brainstorm the main characters, setting, storyline and ending. Show the class what you want them to do by choosing, for example, one of the main characters (e.g. the priest in Guleesh) and asking for an alternative (e.g. make Guleesh's trusted friend a famous painter), or change the setting by placing it in your city.
- Tell your students to make one or two changes and then to decide how these different characters or settings might change the ending. Groups have 10 minutes to plan the changes and then rehearse and act out (using mime and as much language as they are happy to include) their alternative endings.
- Spend a moment to reflect on how each group has modified the story and the way their alternatives have changed the original tale.