



## Exploring 'As Told by the Giant' by Stefan Karlsson

Key topics: Fairytales · Retellings · Half-rhyme · Class poem · Individual writing

Resource written by Rachel Piercey

### Getting to know the poem

Before you read the poem, ask your class if they know any famous giant sayings. The chances are that many of them will know “Fee, fie, foe, fum!” from *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Ask them, why do the words sound good together? They may have some other ideas, but I think two of the main reasons are because of alliteration and because the single thudding syllables sound a bit like a giant’s thudding footsteps!

The giant in *Jack and the Beanstalk* utters these words because of how they sound – he doesn’t go into their meaning. But Stefan’s poem uses the meanings behind the words to build his poem. Go through the definition of ‘fee’ (a payment), ‘fie’ (an old-fashioned exclamation of disapproval) and ‘foe’ (an enemy or rival). What about ‘fum’? It probably doesn’t mean much, at this point... But can they come up with any fanciful giant-themed definitions for it?

Then display the poem (see below) and read it aloud. Which lines stood out to them and why? What were their favourite details? There are no wrong answers! Divide the class into 10 groups and give each group a sentence of the poem to practise reading aloud. (One group will have two sentences: “And fum! How to explain what fum’s about?”) Encourage them to be as dramatic as possible. Then read the poem all together.

### Retelling Fairytales

Ask your class, is the giant the hero or the villain of the normal *Jack and the Beanstalk* stories? Discuss how they feel about the giant in this poem. Do they have a different view of him?

Retelling fairytales from different points of view is a fun way to interact with old, well-known stories. Do they know any other retellings? What are some other ‘alternative endings’ they could give to *Jack and the Beanstalk*?

You could also read ‘Invoice’ (see below), another poem from our People and Characters issue, which explores the story of *The Emperor’s New Clothes* from the tailors’ unique perspective.

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## The sound of the poem

Poets think very hard about how their poems sound – they want them to be pleasing and memorable to read aloud. This also goes for poems which don't have a regular or obvious rhythm and rhyme scheme.

'As Told by the Giant' uses lots of alliteration to make it sound striking and memorable. Go through the poem together and pick out all the alliteration you can find.

Ask your class, does the poem rhyme? Some may say yes, some *no*, and some may say *sort of* – and they're all right, in a way! Stefan uses half-rhyme, or part-rhyme, at the end of each line: ask/trespass, courtesy/sweet, naught/boots etc. Go through and identify each pair (NB, there is a trio of half-rhymes at the end).

None of the pairs rhyme together completely, but they all sound good together, the second word echoing part of the sound of the first word. Sometimes this is with the sound of the vowel (sleep/complete) and sometimes it's the sound of the consonants (books/fix). Half-rhyme is useful because it gives you many more options for your rhyming words and it creates an echoing effect that is different to the finality of full rhyming.

## Class writing

On the board, collect a list of fairytales, for example: *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, *Red Riding Hood*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *Goldilocks*, *Hansel and Gretel* etc. Choose one of them together, then gather ideas for who else's perspective you could use to tell the story. For example, in *Cinderella*, we could also hear from the Ugly Sisters, the mice, the Fairy Godmother, a waiter at the ball, the clock who must strike 12...

Choose one, then ask your pupils, in small groups, to come up with a couple of lines in the voice of this other character, commenting on the familiar story and adding their own unique perspective. Ask each group to share, then write them up. When you've got all the lines, choose the best order. Does it make sense to add any introductory or conclusive lines? Are there any sayings or sounds you could add in somewhere (e.g. "squeak" for the mouse, "bong-bong-bong" for the clock) to get across a sense of your character?

Try to make the last two lines sound good together, using rhyme or half-rhyme.

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## Individual writing

Invite your pupils to write their own new poem, choosing a character (this could also be an object) from a familiar fairytale who will offer a unique perspective on the story. Encourage them to think about the sound of their last two lines, particularly.

Also encourage them to redraft, scribble out and change things – poets almost never get their poem right first time and their notebooks tend to be very messy! When they're ready to write it up neatly, you may like to use the print-out template below. What will they choose as their title?

Explain that if you have written a poem inspired by someone else, it's important to acknowledge them – and the easiest way to do this is with a short line underneath the title (see below).

We would love to see what your pupils come up with! Tag us on Twitter @tygertygermag with a picture or email us on [tygertygermagazine@gmail.com](mailto:tygertygermagazine@gmail.com) for some personalised feedback.



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after 'As Told by the Giant' by Stefan Karlsson

by .....

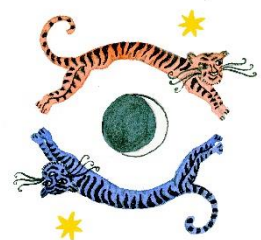




## As Told by the Giant

Fee, yes, the smallest fee is all I ask  
of any strangers who dare to trespass  
in my lair. It seems a common courtesy  
to come with bread or something sweet.  
So *fie* upon him who comes with naught  
but thieving thoughts and muddy boots  
to ruin my rugs and spoil my sleep.  
The house I keep is clean, complete  
with fuzzy blankets, shelves of books.  
Only a *foe*, a crook, would fix  
to disturb such a humble abode.  
And *fum!* How to explain what *fum's* about?  
Well I don't know where you come from  
but if a Giant loves one thing – just one –  
it's *fum!* And surely you, safe at home,  
would fume and fuss if an unwelcome  
brute wormed its way into your room  
without a *fee, fie!* A *foe* who hates *fum!*  
So you understand, I just had to eat him.

by Stefan Karlsson



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## INVOICE: One set of magical clothes

**To:** His Most Wise Imperial Majesty the Emperor

**From:** Shaman and Sons: Weavers, Cloth Merchants and Tailors (by Royal Appointment)

• One pair of underpants	51
• One vest (Both such fine silk, you'll not feel dressed)	72
• One pair of socks, as light as air	80
• One robe, as none but kings could wear (As gauzy as the cloudy skies. Your subjects won't believe their eyes!)	150
• One pair of regal pantaloons (Unique design of large full moons)	150
• One royal cloak, three-metre train (You'll NEVER SEE the like again!)	200
• One month's work, without vacation – weaving pure imagination	300
• <b>TOTAL GOLD PIECES:</b> One thousand and three	1003
• The lesson you learned? That's <b>GRATIS</b> and <b>FREE</b> .	

by Sarah Ziman

