

# ONCE UPON A CLASSROOM :

A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools

Word count: 8893

**Anke Vermeulen**

Student number: 01706546

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Inge Brinkman

A short dissertation Master of Teaching (9SP) submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Teaching in Languages

Academic year: 2022-2023, Master of Teaching: African cultures and languages

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to professor Brinkman, who has once again taken the role of promotor for my third dissertation. Throughout the process of writing she provided feedback whenever I asked for it and I could always count on useful suggestions.

I also want to thank Joris Van Doorselaere, who gave welcome suggestions concerning the educational and heritage component.

Another important person who supported me is Kim. She read various drafts of the work and always gave valuable feedback. The person who corrected my English also deserves a sincere thank you, Hannelore.

At last, I also want to thank the people who cooperated in the workshops for this project, namely the classes of De Studio, in Ostend. The students' and teacher's input were very valuable for the practical component of this dissertation.

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

## Table of content

Acknowledgements .....	2
Table of content.....	3
Abstract .....	4
English.....	4
Dutch .....	4
1 Introduction .....	6
2 Theoretical framework .....	6
2.1 Fairy tales: history and significance.....	7
2.1.1 The history of fairy tales.....	7
2.1.2 Significance of fairy tales .....	9
2.2 Fairy tales in education .....	10
3 Research methodology .....	12
4 Reflection on the workshops .....	14
4.1 Workshop programme .....	14
4.2 Thoughts and reflection .....	15
4.3 Students' thoughts.....	15
5 Discussion: practical considerations on integrating fairy tales.....	16
5.1 Fairy tales in cultural sciences : a suggested approach .....	17
5.1.1 Key competences.....	17
5.1.2 Specific competences human sciences .....	18
5.1.3 Relevance .....	18
6 Conclusion: recommendations for employment in schools and further research .....	19
7 Reference list.....	20
8 Addenda .....	22
8.1 Reflection sheet.....	22
8.1.1 Reflection sheet empty .....	22
8.1.2 Negative reflection sheet .....	22
Translation:.....	22

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

## **Abstract**

### **English**

Fairy tales can be found in all cultures, at all times. They have many functions and advantages. Narratives such as fairy tales are entertaining, but can also be used to reflect upon the society (Bruner 1996; Zipes 2017). Considering literary fairy tales as heritage, the stories can play a role in education as well. There has not been conducted a lot of research about working with fairy tales in Flemish high schools. Therefore, this is a pilot study which aims to answer the question what the benefits of using storytelling and fairy tales in the Flemish curriculum could be as part of heritage education and if the tales can act as a reflection tool.

To answer the research question, two workshops were performed in a high school in Ostend. In these workshops, the students discussed literary fairy tales in general, using various methods such as the Socratic dialogue, think-pair-share and text-to-self connections. By employing these methods, motivation was stimulated and the students were able to reflect upon the current society based on the examined fairy tales.

After the workshops, it became clear that fairy tales can be easily incorporated into the Flemish curriculum, especially with the modernisation happening at the moment. Various key competences and the specific competences of the human sciences programme have room for different interpretations, which can possibly be fairy tales. Choosing to work with fairy tales in class has multiple advantages. The students are more motivated because they have a personal connection with the narratives. Besides this, they gain insight in their own world and working with narratives can enrich and liberate the mind. The students can use it to reflect upon the society and their own developing identities. When using fairy tales or narratives in general, following considerations must be taken into account. The first is that learning objectives and the usefulness of handling a specific topic should always be explicated. In that way, students understand why they do or learn something. Secondly, there is a risk of enforcing the we-them perspective (Van Doorselaere 2022; Grever & Van Boxtel 2014) when working with narratives or heritage in general. The teacher should deal with diverse perspectives and not focus entirely on the Western perspective.

This study only examined the use of fairy tales in the course human sciences, based upon two workshops. There is definitely room for more research, and this thesis acts as an invitation to study the use of fairy tales in high school education more in-depth.

### **Dutch**

Sprookjes kunnen gevonden worden in alle culturen en alle tijden. Ze hebben verschillende functies en voordelen. Zo zijn verhalen zoals sprookjes ontspannend, maar kunnen ze ook gebruikt worden om te reflecteren op de samenleving (Bruner 1996; Zipes 2017). Sprookjes kunnen beschouwd worden als erfgoed en op die manier een meerwaarde hebben in het onderwijs. Er is nog niet veel onderzoek gedaan naar het gebruiken van sprookjes in Vlaamse middelbare scholen. Deze thesis is een pilotstudie die onderzoekt wat de voordelen van sprookjes en het vertellen van verhalen in het Vlaamse onderwijsveld kunnen zijn als deel van erfgoededucatie en als het gebruikt kan worden als een reflectiemiddel.

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

Er werden twee workshops in een school in Oostende georganiseerd, om een antwoord op de bovenstaande onderzoeksvraag te kunnen formuleren. In de workshops bespraken de studenten verschillende sprookjes, gebruik makend van verschillende methodes zoals de Socratische dialoog, *think-pair-share* en *text-to-self connections*. Door deze methodes te gebruiken, waren studenten snel gemotiveerd en konden ze reflecteren over de huidige samenleving op basis van de besproken sprookjes.

Na de workshops werd duidelijk dat sprookjes makkelijk verwerkt kunnen worden in het Vlaamse onderwijsveld, zeker met de modernisatie die op dit moment plaatsvindt. In verschillende sleutelcompetenties en specifieke competenties voor de humane wetenschappen kunnen sprookjes gebruikt worden als voorbeeld of link tot de theorie. Werken met sprookjes in de klas heeft verschillende voordelen. Leerlingen zijn gemotiveerder omdat er een link is met hun persoonlijke leefwereld. Ze kennen de sprookjes al, en hebben zo een connectie met de verhalen. Hiernaast verwerven ze ook meer inzicht in hun eigen wereld en verrijkt het hun geest. De leerlingen kunnen de narratieven gebruiken om te reflecteren over de maatschappij en hun eigen identiteit. Als sprookjes of verhalen in het algemeen gebruikt worden in een educatieve context, moet er rekening gehouden worden met enkele aspecten. Leerdoelen en het nut van een bepaald onderwerp moeten altijd verduidelijkt worden. Zo begrijpen leerlingen waarom ze iets moeten doen of leren. Ten tweede is er een risico verbonden aan het werken met erfgoed, en dus ook met sprookjes. Het wij-zij perspectief zou vergroot kunnen worden (Van Doorselaere 2022; Grever & Van Boxtel 2014), door bijvoorbeeld maar één perspectief aan bod te laten komen. Een leerkracht moet dus diverse perspectieven aanbieden en niet enkel op het Westerse focussen.

Deze thesis onderzocht enkel het gebruik van sprookjes in de richting humane wetenschappen, gebaseerd op twee workshops. Er is zeker ruimte voor meer onderzoek, en deze studie nodigt uit om het gebruik van sprookjes in het Vlaamse middelbare onderwijs verder te onderzoeken.

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

# 1 Introduction

“Fairy tales continue to pervade if not invade our lives throughout the world. They play an intricate role in acculturation, that is, in forming and reflecting the tastes, manners, and ideologies of members of a particular society. They have a powerful effect on how young and old behave and relate to their daily activities. Though seemingly universal, fairy tales serve a specific function in communicating the values and the various preoccupations of different nations.” (Zipes 2012:IX)

Zipes starts the introduction of his book, *The art of subversion* (2012), with these words. Fairy tales are a kind of narrative that influence the behaviour of young and old. The tales seem innocent stories, but in fact communicate important aspects of a society. They can be liberating and empowering, but also suppressive and stereotypical. Fairy tales are something we have all encountered in our youths. In form of Disney movies, the tales of the brothers Grimm, or from a collection of fairy tales at your grandparents’ house. Bacchilega (2013), whose research focuses on fairy tales and their adaptations, adds that fairy tales are now mixed with popular culture, and as such continue to influence both children and adults. According to Bruner (1996), we organise our thinking, experiences and knowledge in a narrative form. Theories and experiences can be understood through narratives. Hearing and telling narratives, stimulates our thinking and coping skills. Tales thus have multiple advantages, for people of all ages. Those advantages can be used not only in our daily lives, but also in education, even as a reflection tool. In Flanders, there is not much literature or research conducted to the use or value of using fairy tales in educational settings. Therefore, this study is a pilot study which aims to answer the question what the benefits of using storytelling and fairy tales in the Flemish curriculum could be as part of heritage education and whether or not the tales can act as a reflection tool. This thesis can be a starting point for more research on this subject. In order to answer the research question, two workshops were performed. Since the scope of this dissertation is limited, more workshops would be too exhaustive. However, there is certainly room for additional research. The results were applied to a specific course in the Flanders educational programme (cultural sciences), but it can also be applied to other courses.

The thesis first explores the complex history of literary fairy tales, and discusses the significance of fairy tales, specifically in education. Next, the used methods are clarified. Subsequently, there is a reflection of the completed workshops. Following this section, a suggested approach to incorporate the fairy tales in Flemish curricula is provided. At last, a final conclusion with recommendations is provided.

## 2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is divided into two major sections. The first discusses fairy tales in general. The definition of fairy tales and the interpretation used in this dissertation is clarified. Subsequently the history is shortly outlined. Next, the contemporary significance of fairy tales is demonstrated and related to the issue of cultural heritage in education. The data gathered about this subject is mainly based on the work of Zipes (2011, 2012, 2017), who has conducted a considerable amount of research on fairy tales. His work focuses precisely on the history of the fairy tale

Note: Please respect the author’s rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master’s dissertation, Ghent University.

and on its current potential significance, rendering it especially relevant for this study. The framework provides studies and theories about fairy tales to have a desirable understanding of the methodology and aim for research in general.

## ***2.1 Fairy tales: history and significance***

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, ‘fairy tale’ refers to different meanings of the term. The first refers to a fairy tale as “a story (as for children) involving fantastic forces and beings (such as fairies, wizards, and goblins)”. The website adds that this can also be referred to as ‘fairy story’. The second interpretation is “a story in which improbable events lead to a happy ending”. The last one is defined as “a made-up story usually designed to mislead” (Merriam-Webster 2023). All three meanings of the online dictionary are insufficient. The first one restricts a fairy tale to only fantastic forces and beings, while in Little Red Riding Hood there is no fantastic force, and yet it is defined as a fairy tale. The second, although generally it is believed that fairy tales are for children, this can be contradicted. The meaning is quite simplistic, a fairy tale is more than events leading to a happy ending. The last one is also not relevant for all fairy tales. The objective of fairy tales is not purely to mislead one’s mind, but also to entertain for example. Zipes (2011) wrote that many academics have attempted to define a fairy tale, but almost all have failed. How can a fairy tale be defined then? In order to define fairy tales as something concrete, it is necessary to look at its history first.

### ***2.1.1 The history of fairy tales***

Although different in form, thematic concerns, media and performance, fairy tales exist in all cultures of all times. For this dissertation, we look at literary fairy tales in particular. According to Zipes (2011) the literary fairy tale emerged long ago from numerous other tiny tales. The form and content were different from now. The fairy tale underwent a whole transformation to become what it is. It is shaped by the interaction of orality and print, and other technological innovations.

Zipes proposes to speak of ‘literary fairy tale’ when it concerns the fairy tale in written form as is currently the most common form in European countries. The author writes in his book about fairy tales, its history and context. He argues that it would be misleading to talk about a diachronic history of the literary fairy tale, but suggests a historical frame in which the early literary fairy tale originated (Zipes 2012:15). This historical frame begins with Straparola’s work in the 1550s in Italy, who adapted tales from the oral tradition into a novelle. He revised oral tales and made a printed version. His tales circulated around Europe and influenced educated writers. From Straparola, the frame goes further to Basile. He was also an Italian writer and revised tales from the oral tradition into fairy tales as well. The tales were told during banquets with music, games and dance. His tales were popular in Italy and France. Both Straparola and Basile reflected on civilizing processes in their tales. From the two Italian writers, the tales develop further in France in the 1690s. The tales were changed conforming to the French mores and social codes of the time. They were influenced by the Italians in terms of narrative strategies. These strategies facilitated the publishing of subversive views that questioned the power of hegemonic groups (2012:19). In other words, the Italian writers demonstrated how oral and literary fairy tales can deal with delicate issues, in such a metaphorical form that no one bothered. The French writers realised that tales could be adapted to express their views on the civilité. During the reign of Louis XIV, for example, they critiqued his ruling and politics using fairy tales. Within that frame that went from Straparola and Basile to the

Note: Please respect the author’s rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master’s dissertation, Ghent University.

French writers, there was an institutionalization of characters that we now know as fairy-tale characters. The subjects, motifs, metaphors and plots from contemporary fairy tales originated from authors like Straparola, Basile and Perrault. Charles Perrault was a French writer. He was convinced that tales were not mere tales, but contained a useful moral. The tales are remembered more easily because of the playful narrative. Perrault adjusted tales in such a way they were destined for the elite more than for everyone. It was a trend in France to adapt popular tales to a more elite audience, which caused the literary *bourgeoisification* of the oral folktale. Because of the adaptations, a children's literature came into existence, which introduced manners to children. Zipes quotes the thoughts of Lilyane Mourey in his work: "Perrault's suppressions, omissions or additions to the folk tales allow us to conclude that he did not see his task as restoring them in their authenticity. Those stories which he found interesting and amusing became above all the privileged places where the man, the politician, and the academician could put his ideas and his fantasies to work in a leisurely way and sometimes to make caricatures" (Mourey cited in Zipes 2012:46). The fairy tales or oral traditions, who once were for everyone, young and old, were now delimited to the elite and to children in written form. Besides Perrault, there was a group of French women writers who influenced the history of fairy tales. They created fairy tales to express their views about young people, and prepare them for the social roles they should play in society. One of the women writers was Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy. She was part of the group women writers in the eighteenth century, but also coined the term 'fairy tales'. Fairy tales exist longer than the seventeenth century, in terms of stories in oral traditions or folklore. However, the genre as we know it now, received its name when d'Aulnoy named her first story a 'conte de fées', literally a story about fairies. In many stories at that time, fairies played a significant role; representing protest against the church or portraying the important role of women in the eighteenth century. The first fairy tale of d'Aulnoy was a recreation of oral folklore, to celebrate fairies. Fairy tales are seen as units of cultural information, stemming from myths and oral narratives d'Aulnoy had read or heard. The term was coined by d'Aulnoy, and shared by other writers in re-creating tales about fairies. The narrative tradition grew in unusual ways, which expanded the meaning of the fairy tale (Zipes 2011). After the Italian and French writers put their stamp on the genre of fairy tales, the work of the Brothers Grimm appeared. In Germany, the brothers Grimm also started with collecting original folk tales and adapted them into potent literary fairy tales. In the late nineteenth century writers started to reread the tales, and noted that the tales indoctrinated children to learn fixed roles and functions within a bourgeois society. Writers started using fairy tales as models to write innovative and emancipatory tales. They were more critical towards changing conditions in advanced technological societies which were based on capitalist production and social relations. The writers also noticed that the tales contained sexist and racist attitudes, emphasising the passive role girls have in activities and the accumulation of wealth for boys. As a progressive reaction, the West German writers parodied and revised the fairy tales of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century (Zipes 2012:58). Joossen (2007) agrees with this in his work, and states that the reason of collecting was to preserve the stories for the next generation. These stories were popular, but as of the nineteenth century especially, they were mainly read and not orally spread. Therefore it looked like the richness of possible variants and creativity was forever lost. However, since the 1970s and 1980s, writers create parodies and alternations on the popular fairy tales. This genre can be seen as a cross-over genre; it connects youth literature with adult literature, oral with written and literary criticism with literature. A well-known example is the collection of fairy tale parodies of Louis Paul Boon. When writers revisited and altered the tales, they were also interested in the origins

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.



and sources of the Brother Grimm's stories. Whilst studying the origins of the collected tales, it becomes clear that different versions of one tale were taken together to form one generalised story. The tales of the brothers Grimm also underwent a change in the target audience. Whereas the tales were first intended as scientific works for adults, they became children's literature. This can be seen in the vocabulary used and the themes dealt with. Rahman (2017) confirms the change in the target audience and states that the first printed works in the literary genre of fairy tales were meant for adults to read. Following from the above, literary fairy tales originated out of oral folk tales, but were adapted and stylized into other versions. Apart from the important change of medium – from oral to written, the stories were also altered in content, message and form. The stylization could serve multiple purposes, namely indoctrinating children, expressing unpopular opinions about society, or to be more suitable for the elitist class. As Bacchilega (2010:3) states:

“[...]the "classic" fairy tale is a literary appropriation of the older folk tale, an appropriation which nevertheless continues to exhibit and reproduce some folkloric features. As a "borderline" or transitional genre, it bears the traces of orality, folkloric tradition, and socio-cultural performance, even when it is edited as literature for children or it is marketed with little respect for its history and materiality. And conversely, even when it claims to be folklore, the fairy tale is shaped by literary traditions with different social uses and users.”

The origins of literary fairy tales thus lie in folklore or oral traditions, folk tales. Such oral, folk tales continue to be told, but in many cases the literary fairy tale is taking an ever more prominent role. The latter went from literature to express one's view, to literature to express one's values covertly, to indoctrinating children to adopt certain roles in society. They exist in all times and cultures and have different functions. Why they are so significant and keep being as such, is discussed in the next section.

### 2.1.2 *Significance of fairy tales*

Why do we read or listen to fairy tales? Fairy tales or folk tales have always been important in the lives of human beings, as far as we can tell. There must be a reason for the persistent appearance of (fairy) tales in our lives. According to Bruner (1991:4), who contributed his life to human cognitive psychology, we organize our experience and memory of events in the form of a narrative. Zipes (2017) agrees with this, and states that all forms of stories reshape personal experiences. According to Zipes the tale was designed to divert, amuse and instruct ideologically. The tales comment and reflect upon the social reality, and the fantastic of the tales has a liberating potential (Zipes 2012). This is an important feature to recognise. A fairy tale can be normative; communicating values in a specific way, but also liberating and in that way providing an alternative. The fairy tale liberates readers of all ages to return to familiar moments in their lives. They can be used as a means to reflect on happenings of the past. Another way in which the liberating aspect of fairy tales can be seen, is in the retelling. By changing the fairy tales in a modern and progressive way, stereotypes are questioned, which can be very liberating. Bacchilega (2013:4) also writes about this in her book, *Fairy Tales Transformed?*. She writes about the many purposes a fairy tale can serve. They let us dwell in astonishment and explore possibilities. For some people fairy tales encourage escapism, while for others, they offer wisdom. Another author who wrote about the importance of fairy tales is Rahman. He states that an important function is teaching lessons. He writes that tales are there to “instil new knowledge, values, behaviour patterns, develop logical thinking and encourage children

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

to value and practice honesty” (Rahman, 2017: 338). In summary, fairy tales have multiple functions. They help human beings to process experiences, teach us lessons, but also amuse and distract us from our daily lives.

## **2.2 Fairy tales in education**

As stated in the previous chapter, fairy tales are seen as tales for amusement, to instil behaviour patterns and sometimes to teach lessons. How can this form of narratives be integrated in schools then, especially as a reflective tool? This chapter examines if there is a significant link between education, heritage and fairy tales and how to use that link to introduce fairy tales in educational settings.

Bruner (1996:3) wrote in his book *The culture of education* about the connection between culture and education. He states that culture shapes the mind and gives us the possibility to create our world and conceptions of ourselves. He argues that there are broadly speaking two views on how the mind works; namely the computational view, concerned with information and unambiguous rules, and secondly the culturalist view, that relates to more messy hermeneutic meaning-making processes. Bruner does not at all deny the importance of the computational view, but holds that the culturalist view is hardly used in our educational systems. As he notes, culture -as meaning making process- provides tools for organizing or understanding our worlds in communicable ways. Creating opinions and expressing individual thoughts are all influenced by the culture one is part of. Therefore, learning and thinking are also a part of a cultural environment. They depend on the utilization of cultural resources, and frame education in their culture. Bruner includes tales and narratives in his cultural idea. He sees them as a mode of thinking, which enables children (and adults) to construct a version of the world in which they can see themselves (Bruner 1996: 39). In schools the art of the narrative is treated as more decorative than necessary. This does not make sense, since cultural origins and beliefs are framed in story form. Bruner therefore argues that “skill in narrative construction and narrative understanding is crucial to constructing our lives and a “place” for ourselves in the possible world we will encounter” (Bruner 1996: 40). Narrative skills must be cultivated and stimulated to grow in order to enable children and adults to create an identity and find one’s place in the world. Bruner also discusses folk psychologies and pedagogies in his work. The folk psychology reflects about cultural beliefs, while the pedagogy helps children to learn about the world. In this kind of pedagogy the traditional concept of an all-knowing teacher, who tells something new to unknowing students is traded for a more interactional concept. Each teacher differs in teaching and instructing, and the folk pedagogy keeps four models of pedagogy in mind, each with its own educational goals. The first model sees children as imitative learners. The second sees children as learning from didactic exposure. He states that the learner’s mind is passive. These two models confine to the traditional concept mentioned before. The third model sees children as thinkers. The teacher helps the child understanding, and uses discourse, collaboration and negotiation as didactic ways of working. The last one sees children as knowledgeable, where teaching helps children to distinguish personal knowledge from cultural knowledge. Culture influences education, since it provides the tools for organizing and understanding our world. Fairy tales are cultural resources that can certainly be used. As shown in Bruner’s work, narratives are crucial to help us find our place in the world and to construct our lives. When implementing tales in education a kind of narrative thinking is added in an educational context. When doing this, the teacher should be open for the child’s perspective and should let

Note: Please respect the author’s rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master’s dissertation, Ghent University.

the traditional concept of an all-knowing teacher go. The learner's mind should be seen as active and open for thoughts. The teacher takes the role of a trainer that helps the child to develop its mind further, using narrative structures.

Bruner's remarks lead us into seeing fairy tales in education as a way of heritage education; if fairy tales connect us to 'cultural origins and beliefs', the concept of heritage can certainly be useful. Before elaborating on this link, the concept of heritage must be defined. In her book *Uses of heritage*, Smith (2006) describes heritage in different ways. She sees it as a performance, a cultural process, an experience. In the introduction she states that "heritage is a multi-layered performance – be this a performance of visiting, managing, interpretation or conservation – that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present" (Smith 2006: 3). In the book, she pleads for the meaning of heritage to go further than solely monuments and therefore emphasises the importance of intangible heritage. When thinking about heritage, it must go beyond monuments and statues, things, but include the process of making memories and meaning, which facilitates a sense of identity and belonging. Intangible heritage goes beyond materiality, and as Smith writes, UNESCO had a concern for it since the 1950s. This concern has been expressed in copyright matters about folklore. The experience of material heritage differs from intangible heritage, because the sense of audience in for example oral tradition is dissimilar. Not only does Smith (2006: 56) emphasise we have to speak of heritage, she goes even further by redefining heritage as "inherently intangible in the first place". The argument she gives for this redefinition is that the real subject of heritage preservation is linked to values and meanings. These values can be symbolized by physical sites, places, landscapes or within performances of languages, dance and oral histories. Grever and Van Boxtel (2014) agree that heritage only becomes meaningful when experiences about it are exchanged. Hence, heritage can be both tangible and intangible, but above all a way to engage with the present and the past. Even though its nature varies, it remains a cultural process. As fairy tales are also a way to engage to the past or present and a way to preserve values, it is a form of (in)tangible heritage.

In their book *Verlangen naar tastbaar verleden* (2014), Grever & Van Boxtel write about heritage education. They state that heritage can be used, both material and intangible, as a primary source of instruction. By using heritage in educational settings, students develop their historical awareness. Engaging in heritage has multiple advantages according to the authors. It would create a richer perspective on historical events and evolution. Students also train their contextualising skills, learn how to identify processes of change and continuity and critically explore source material. Besides these advantages, the authors also provide some critical thoughts about heritage education. When using heritage, different identities come forward. We should be careful with this, since not all identities are included in these materials or narratives. Therefore, heritage should always be fully contextualised and a certain distance has to be maintained when immersing in a particular part of heritage. Van Doorselaere's research also focuses on heritage as a cultural process. He argues for its implementation in education and states that perspectives of diverse students can be taken into account as there is a need for a more open school culture (Van Doorselaere 2022). This correlates to Bruner's arguments, that culture (narratives in particular) helps in organizing our world and coping with the present and past. Zipes (2017) agrees with the need to incorporate storytelling in education as well. He states that teaching should become a collaborative effort among children, their families and experimental programmes. Stories reshape personal experiences and contents of cultural and familial heritage. By reintroducing them, children learn how to tell stories, how to create their identity

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

and gain insight in their cultural heritage. The cultural heritage as such also provides students insight and trains various skills. According to Grever and Van Boxtel (2014), the incorporation of heritage in educational settings is possible based on the learning objectives in attainment targets. Applying this to the Flemish curriculum, thanks to modernisation, heritage can be placed in different key competences, such as historical and cultural awareness.

### 3 Research methodology

In the following chapter the research methodology is discussed. The method used is based on both Zipes and Bruner's work. Zipes (2017) pleads in an article for the magazine *Storytelling, Self, Society* for reintroducing storytelling into schools. His work was a major inspiration for the research done for this thesis, since he has done workshops in classes as well. Bruner's book, *The culture of education*, formed the more theoretical basis, combined with various discussion techniques to design the method used for conducting the research.

In order to find out if reintroducing and discussing fairy tales in the Flemish curriculum adds value to the curriculum and can act as a tool for reflection, research was conducted in a secondary school in Ostend. Two different groups, aged between 16 and 18, cooperated in a workshop. In the workshop, the objective was to discuss and convert classical fairy tales. As Zipes (2017) writes, there are a lot of dubious messages in many fairy tales. He gives some examples of these ambiguous morals. In *Snow White*, the message would be that princesses only have to passively wait to get a prince, or in *Little Red Riding Hood*, girls get blamed for their own rape. These are just a few examples where fairy tales communicate normative behaviour. This, as mentioned earlier, was a particular development of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were also writers then who tried to change the story and parody them. This is what the aim of the workshop is. By analysing the characters, their actions, perspective and speech, the students have a broad idea of how the fairy tale works and what it wants to communicate. By engaging the students to think about these processes, the students gain insight in such strategies and might apply this in their further lives as well.

In the workshops, the researcher first asks the students to tell a story from their childhood. As Zipes (2017:43) mentions, the students are as such refamiliarized with the tale. It is a possibility that the researcher or teacher then gives some background information of the story. After this, there can be a (class) discussion about the tale. Such a discussion can take many forms. The main questions the students are asked are which characters can be found in the story, what they do and/or say, and in whose perspective the story is told. It can be in the form of a learning conversation, choosing between the Socratic dialogue, a group discussion or think-pair-share. The Socratic method is further defined in an article of Delic and Becirovic (2016:512). They state that the method was used by Socrates, a Greek philosopher, to "sculpt young minds". The Socratic dialogue is part of the method, where the teacher observes and helps the student. He acts as a guide, not as an all-knowing lecturer. The dialogue is taken further by both student and teacher, by questioning the other's thoughts. When using the Socratic dialogue, the role of facilitator is not that important. He or she only has to keep the focus on the question. The purpose is to have a debate, in order to find the truth or broaden your mind (Delic and Becirovic 2016). Van Rossem (2006) states in his work that it is not that easy to apply this method in an educational setting. A lot of research has been conducted and there are not many secondary schools where this method or dialogue is used. The pedagogical approach is different: instead of having a fixed subject, manner of evaluation and strict learning objectives, the Socratic dialogue is more liberate. Although the pedagogy is different, the

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

method has a lot of advantages. Students think in questions instead of answers, they see alternative interpretations of certain concepts, they experience differences in points of view and learn how to deal with them (Van Rossem 2006:49). These are only three of all the advantages Van Rossem mentions. Another strategy that can be used is think-pair-share. Kaddoura (2013) writes about this strategy in an article about nursing students. He states that it is a cooperative discussion strategy, named to the three stages of student action. In the first stage, the teacher stimulates the student's thinking through a question. In the second stage, the students pair up to discuss their answers. The final stage is meant for sharing their thoughts with the whole class. The strategy helps the students to develop problem solving skills and work in group. Overall there is less peer pressure and more participation. Students are engaged with their own learning, while gaining knowledge from different perspectives. A third method that can be used to help students think critically about stories is through making connections. There are three different kinds of connections, namely text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. In this dissertation, the focus lies on the second one, text-to-self. According to Valcke and Decraene (2020), students are more motivated when they can link a task or content to their own world, and as such understand its value. On the website *Read, write, think*, the author Cathy Allen Simon (2023) clarifies this further. By making connections students will be able to personally relate to a text, or in this context, a fairy tale. Students will be asked to think about different questions. By making authentic connections, students will be able to have a deeper understanding of the fairy tale. It also makes them more engaged in the reading experience. Hajhosseiny (2012) also writes about these methods and describes them as instructional strategies to stimulate critical thinking. Both are part of dialogic teaching; by setting up social interactions, students learn to engage in dialogues through asking questions and proposing ideas. The students are searching to construct knowledge and the teacher acts as a facilitator in this process. As such, the students participate more in their learning evolution. The selected methods have multiple advantages. They attract students' attention to other issues, pose different views and provide opportunities to distinguish different points of view and reasoning. This can be related to Bruner's work. He speaks of four different models and pleads for using the model where the child is an active player. Dialogic teaching is a method where this model can be placed, where the child can give input (Bruner 1996). By discussing the fairy tales, the students will develop different skills in debating, but also in respecting other students' points of view and gaining insight in the civilizing processes the tale communicates. After the discussion, the instruction is to tell a counter-version. This other version can be made up or taken from the oral tradition. Before doing so, the teacher or researcher gives an example. Zipes (2017:48) states that:

“The telling of a countertale is meant to jolt the students into realising that every classical fairy tale can be changed to fit one's perspective, that the structure and message can be altered, just as one can play and alter one's life—within limits, of course. And that is what storytelling can help students do—test the limits, test the standards, test words of our languages and rules”.

Zipes summarizes in this paragraph that students gain confidence in playing with the language, while also getting to know more about the culture and heritage. Besides these advantages of telling a counter tale, Zipes writes in his book *Fairy tales and the art of subversion*, that retelling traditional fairy tales in a modern way could be liberating, because for example stereotypes are questioned. It is possible to compare the new version to the older tale, which makes the authoritarian quality visible (Zipes 2012). By retelling a story or fairy tale, the students can pick up stereotypes and learn storytelling all at once. This is a different approach to teaching, and as Bruner (1996) states, a reformulation of the

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

standard teaching methods is needed. By incorporating fairy tales in the curriculum and doing workshops with them, there is a possibility to shift away from the traditional ways of teaching. He also brings up the fact that narratives are not only there to enrich the mind. By engaging students in narratives, they learn to understand more general theories. Narratives can be a mode of thinking.

## **4 Reflection on the workshops**

In order to be able to discuss the workshops in depth, there is need for a reflection first. In this section the workshop programme is briefly outlined. Next my own experiences and thoughts are clarified. In the last part the students' thoughts about the workshop are described.

### **4.1 Workshop programme**

In April I gave two workshops for this dissertation. The participants were students of the high school De Studio in Ostend. There were two groups, each consisting of about ten students. The first workshop was in the fifth form, where nine students were present. The second workshop was for sixth formers, where twelve students participated. Both classes studied human sciences. De Studio is not a traditional secondary school. The school emphasises the interaction with students, their autonomy and critical thinking. It is part of public education in Belgium, which means they are not catholic and open to any belief (De Studio s.d.). The educational and cultural responsibilities in Belgium are not federal anymore since 1988. They have been shifted to the community level. The word community refers to the language community, from which there are three in Belgium; the French, German and Flemish. Some tasks are to be performed by the federal government, such as the end of compulsory schooling and the pension system. This makes the whole education system in Belgium complicated. The learning objectives students have to obtain at the end of a year, are summarized in curricula from schools or school associations. These curricula are based upon attainment targets, created by the DVO (*dienst voor onderwijsontwikkeling*; service for education development). The government (community level) has to approve the curricula that are created by the schools or associations. The catholic curricula differ slightly from the public education curricula, but the basis from both are the attainment targets (Valcke & Standaert 2020).

Each workshop lasted 50 minutes, in which I tried to discuss fairy tales with the students. I started with a mind map on the board and asked the students which terms they linked to fairy tales. When they mentioned a fairy tale, we discussed this one more in depth. I asked them to tell the story and if there were people who remembered it differently. Then I had them wonder about the different layers of that fairy tale: who speaks, who takes action, whose perspective is it. To answer these questions, I used the think-pair-share method (cf. chapter 3). Next, I had them think about the way they identified themselves to the story (Text-to-self). We discussed their thoughts on these matters in a classical way. After these discussions, they made counter-versions on the story in groups. They then told the stories to their peers and we discussed the differences together. In the second group I switched the order. First we made the mind map and discussed the story, then they made a text-to-self connection and counter-version. After telling the counter-versions, we discussed focalisation and perspective of the stories in a comparable way. More details about the project will be discussed more thoroughly in the following section.

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

## **4.2 *Thoughts and reflection***

In my opinion, the starter of the workshops was satisfactory. The students' attention was immediately stimulated and they were keen on cooperating. The words they linked to fairy tales were archetypes, evil/good, witches, dragons, Grimm, wolf, castle, prince, and some examples of fairy tales. They named Little Red Riding Hood in both workshops, which made it easier for me to elaborate on the latter. I asked the students to retell the fairy tale in the way they remembered it. They did this in a classical way as a group, which caused discussion at times. These debates were about the reasons why the girl visited her grandmother; whether the grandmother was ill or if she just wanted to pay her a visit. Other topics of discussion were the questions how the wolf encountered with the little girl and what happened with him at the end. By reconstructing the story together, the Socratic method was used. The students discussed the narrative, some disagreeing with others, and I functioned as a monitor, asking questions to make them think further. After reconstructing the fairy tale, I had them think about the actions and the personalities of the characters. They soon realised that the wolf and hunter have a more active role than the female characters, and that Little Red is portrayed as naive. I then asked them questions to have them think more about the portraits of the different characters: why are they assigned certain features? While discussing this, I also introduced the text-to-self connection. At first, it was hard for them to relate to the story, which is understandable. I helped them by telling an alternative story that they could identify with and that has a similar story line as Little Red Riding Hood. By doing this, they could relate to the little girl, and understood the characteristics and hidden stereotypes of the story better. Subsequently the students were instructed to make a counter-version of a tale of choice. The students could choose to use terms I gave them (f.ex. witch, bicycle, Pizza Hut) or make the alternative version from scratch. This was a more creative assignment, which many students appreciated. The stories were creative and while discussing them it became clear that the students held the previous discussions about other fairy tales into account. They switched normative gender roles or played with the archetypes and gave them different features, for example a good witch or a naive boy. They also included all people, for example in one story the main character was a trans-person. Each story contained a moral and reflected current values in Belgian society. They included everyday cases, which made the stories very relatable. When they had created their own story, I had them switch groups. Each student had to tell their group's story to their new group members. They did that two times. The third time someone had to tell a story they had just heard. Some stories had changed in such a manner that the students were surprised. At the end of the workshop I gave the students a reflection sheet, so I would know what their thoughts were on the try-out. This will be discussed in the following section.

## **4.3 *Students' thoughts***

The majority of the students found it 'fun', 'interesting' and 'new'. The things they learnt are that fairy tales change through time and as such there are different versions of the classic fairy tales they know. Some students see this as a result of oral transmission. They also wrote that there are often hidden or obvious stereotypes in popular fairy tales such as Little Red Riding Hood. A child's perception of the world can be influenced by fairy tales, according to some students. Lastly, some students remarked that, by thinking about a counter-version of the stories, they realised the ambiguity of the normative values often present in popular tales. There was only one student who did not find the workshop

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

interesting, and learned nothing at all. He wrote on his reflection sheet that he did not see the point and found this a waste of time. This reflection sheet can be found in addenda 8.1.2. This will be discussed further in the next chapter. In general, the students were very cooperative and enthusiastic about the workshop. They learned in an unconventional way about the messages a tale can convey and how to cope with that.

## **5 Discussion: practical considerations on integrating fairy tales**

As Zipes (2012) states in his work, literary fairy tales are constantly reread and retold throughout a child's lifetime. They have a liberating potential and reflect a process of struggle. It is not a surprise that the start of the workshop was immediately welcomed with great enthusiasm. The students were keen on working with this subject. When retelling a fairy tale (in the workshop: Little Red Riding Hood), the students discussed the 'correct' story. Here, like Zipes (2017) also mentions, they are refamiliarized with the tale and discussion flows out of it. The teacher's function is limited to guidance, triggering the students to discuss the matter thoroughly. This corresponds to the Socratic method, where the students listen to each other and try to acquire the truth or broaden their mind (Delic and Becirovic, 2016). Soon the students realised that tales can change through time and linked it to for example gossiping. The Socratic method appeared to be very useful. The students learnt to listen to each other, express their opinions and respect other perspectives. Van Rossem (2006) agrees with these advantages, but also states that it is not evident to integrate this method into schools, due to the absence of a fixed subject and strict learning objectives. In Flemish curricula these learning objectives are prominent, but the Socratic dialogue or method should not be excluded just because of this. It can be used in debating about a certain subject or to explore certain topics. Objectives should be respected, but the way in which they are obtained is not given and can be chosen freely. This also corresponds with Bruner's thoughts, stating that the concept of an all-knowing teacher should give way for a teacher that allows space for the child's perspective (Bruner 1996).

Another method used in the workshop that proved itself worthy, is the think-pair-share method. The students first think for themselves, then share their ideas with their neighbour and lastly the questions are discussed classically. According to Ryan & Deci's self-determination theory (2000) innate psychological needs and people's inherent growth tendencies are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration. There are three needs that stimulate this growth and intrinsic motivation, namely needs for competences, relatedness and autonomy. The think-pair-share method both responds to relatedness and competences. By discussing the answers with their neighbour, the students are more confident about their findings. Also, the discussion and class dialogue create more affinity in the class group. In the workshop, autonomy was also granted to the students in creating the counter-tale. They were given the opportunity to choose between the terms handed to them, or make up a story from scratch. By doing this, the students generate greater intrinsic motivation, curiosity and a desire to be challenged (Ryan & Deci 2000).

As mentioned before, the students were pleased with the assignment to create a counter-tale. Both Zipes (2012) and Bacchilega (2010) state that telling traditional fairy tales in an alternative way can be liberating, especially by questioning stereotypes. This can be connected to what the students experienced; they questioned the normative roles that are assigned to certain characters and rewrote the fairy tale using round, innovative characters. The students mentioned their realisation of these normative roles, which can indeed be liberating. Also, telling the stories again helped

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.



them reflect on our current society. The students extended the range of characters so they could identify with them. They also linked it with events in the past, such as the arrival of the printing press and what it meant for orally spread tales. This connection they made, is an important aspect of the workshop. The workshop, as stated before, started with a mind map and a short explanation for what it was meant (research for this dissertation). However, this was not enough background information for the students. Zipes (2017) points out that, after refamiliarizing with the fairy tale, some background information can be given. In my opinion, this is not enough. The students need more background information, together with the explication of the learning objectives: why do we use fairy tales and why is it valuable to learn more about them? Valcke & Decraene (2020) argue in their book that, according to the self-determination theory, students are more likely to be motivated when the learning objectives are clarified and when the usefulness of the task or subject is understood. Therefore, when working with fairy tales it is important to emphasise the learning objectives and usefulness. The student who thought the workshop was useless, clearly needed more structure and a clarification of the objectives. In order to show this usefulness, it is opportune to link the content or form of fairy tales to a specific course. In that way, it can also be linked to explicit learning objectives and its usefulness can be pointed out more easily.

## ***5.1 Fairy tales in cultural sciences : a suggested approach***

The curricula in Flanders' education system are being revised at the moment. Before, the attainment targets in the secondary education were more than twenty years old. The government has been working on them for more than two years, and for the third and fourth year they are already in use. The attainment targets for the fifth form will be used in 2023-2024, and for the sixth form in 2024-2025. In this dissertation, the new attainment targets will be used, since these are the ones schools will work with in the future. The new attainment targets are based on sixteen key competences, including financial competences, historical awareness and digital competences. Each programme has also got its specific attainment targets (Willems 2021). The focus in this work lies on the curricula of the fifth and sixth form of the programme human sciences only, since the limited scope of this dissertation. First, the possibilities for the key competences will be discussed, followed by a consideration of the specific competences for the human sciences programme. All attainment targets referred to can be found via this link [https://onderwijsdoelen.be/modernisatie?onderwijsstructuur=SO\\_3DE\\_GRAAD](https://onderwijsdoelen.be/modernisatie?onderwijsstructuur=SO_3DE_GRAAD) (Onderwijsdoelen s.d.).

### ***5.1.1 Key competences***

The first key competence I want to discuss is citizenship. Attainment target 7.8 mentions that students are able to use strategies in order to engage in dialogues being informed and with arguments about social challenges. This is one of the first attainment targets, and can be immediately linked to fairy tales. The attainment target does not mention a specific subject, only social challenges. One can link fairy tales to social challenges, discuss the normative characters or events and debate about this. In the second key competence, cultural awareness, there are more attainment targets fairy tales can be associated to. For example 16.1, students investigate the social relevance of art and cultural expressions. Literary fairy tales are a form of culture and narratives a form of art, like Bruner (1996) mentioned. For the digital competence, fairy tales can be easily incorporated as well. The subject can be a fairy tale that became a Disney movie, and students can make a project around it. Historical awareness is also a key competence that allows fairy tales to be a subject. For example, 8.10, students reflect critically about the collective remembrance of historical phenomena. Literary fairy tales

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

are literally a collective remembrance of historical phenomena. These are only few examples of possibilities of incorporating fairy tales in the key competences. There is always a vague description of what the students need to achieve, but how they achieve it, is open.

### *5.1.2 Specific competences human sciences*

The new attainment targets have four specific competences for the human sciences programme. These are philosophy, art and culture, behavioural sciences and social sciences. For philosophy, fairy tales can always be taken as an introduction, after which more complex theories can be outlined. The same can be said about behavioural sciences. For instance 14.1.5, students reflect about parenting using pedagogical models. Snow White can be taken as an example, and pedagogical models can be applied to it. For the competence art criticism, students reflect upon art and on the concept of beauty (4.7.3). Here as well, a literary fairy tale can be taken as an example and linked to other theories. The same can be proposed for the social sciences. Reflecting about social issues (15.1.3) can be done using a fairy tale as example.

### *5.1.3 Relevance*

The two previous sections proved that literary fairy tales can be easily incorporated into the new attainment targets, in different (key) competences. What rests, however, is what the added value of working with fairy tales in secondary education is.

When using fairy tales as an example or application to a complicated theory, there are many advantages. First of all, students are more likely to be motivated, because they have a personal connection to the subject. Literary fairy tales are known by young and old in Belgian society. When working with fairy tales, students will be refamiliarized with the tales and reminded about their youth. This way they will feel connected to the subject matter. Besides the motivational advantage, utilizing fairy tales means utilizing intangible heritage. Dealing with heritage, as Smith (2006: 56) states, is engaging with a set of values and meanings, including elements such as emotions, memories and cultural experiences. Bruner (1996) mentioned that culture provides the tools for organizing and understanding our worlds. When engaging with heritage, such as narratives and fairy tales, students gain insight into understanding their world, which is after all, the most important goal of education generally speaking. Grever & Van Boxtel (2014) add that using heritage in education creates unique possibilities for historical awareness. Students will realise that meanings can alter, and the ways people cope with the past can change as well. The latter is already proven in the workshops I gave as the students realised that meanings, fairy tales and their morals can change through oral transmission and time. The third advantage of working with fairy tales is that it can be liberating. Thinking about a counter-tale, the characters and moral of the narrative stereotypes are questioned. The workshop also confirmed this value, since the students were very passionate about it. A last advantage is working with narratives as a mode of thought (Bruner 1996). We construct a version of ourselves and shape our identity through narratives. By exploring fairy tales, students engage in narratives and learn to understand their identity and place in the world better.

The risk of working with fairy tales, however, is the reinforcement of the we-them perspective, as Van Doorselaere (2022) mentioned in his work. We live in a multicultural society, where students give meanings to the past

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

in different ways. It is important to incorporate various examples (in this case: fairy tales), to include every student. Van Grever & Boxtel (2014) confirm this, and state that there is a great need to relive the past and support the identity. When using heritage as learning material, it is recommended to find a balance between a recognisable and distant past.

## **6 Conclusion: recommendations for employment in schools and further research**

The research question posed in the introduction to this dissertation, is what the benefits of using storytelling and fairy tales in the Flemish curriculum could be as part of heritage education and whether the narratives can be used as a tool for reflection. By first looking at the history of literary fairy tales, it became clear that authors such as Straparola and Basile already used fairy tales to reflect on civilizing processes. Fairy tales keep on existing and changing through time, due to different reasons. They organise our experiences, memories and events. Besides this, they have a liberating potential by questioning the characters and the assigned roles. Narratives and fairy tales help us find our identity and place in the world. As Bruner (1996) states, they can be looked upon as cultural resources. In the workshops I worked around fairy tales, using them as resources to provoke discussion. In these discussions, I functioned as a guide, based upon the Socratic method. The students learned to discuss, respect each others' opinions and broaden their minds about the subject. Also the think-pair-share and text-to-self connection proved their worthiness. The methods stimulate motivation and work on the three aspects of the self-determination theory; autonomy, relatedness and competence (Ryan & Deci 2000).

In the workshops the students created a counter-tale of an existing fairy tale. By doing this, they engaged with narratives and heritage. They questioned stereotypes and made a version in line with current norms and values. This was liberating and helped them to reflect on the current society. The workshops pointed out that working with fairy tales can be very useful, but there is a need for a clarification of goals and learning objectives, so the students understand the value of engaging with such stories. It became clear in the discussion that it is certainly possible to incorporate fairy tales in the curricula of Flanders' education system, in various courses. The learning objectives are strict, but the way in which students obtain them is not fixed. The teacher can choose the subject while obtaining a certain learning objective, which, in many cases, can be a fairy tale. The advantages of working with them are multiple. They trigger motivation, because often students have a personal connection with narratives. Questioning narratives can be liberating, and engaging with them in general helps understand the world better. Additionally, fairy tales are intangible heritage, and engaging with heritage also helps students to think more critically, and helps them to reflect upon their lives. Although this all sounds very positive, the teacher should keep diversity in mind and offer various tales, not only from the Western cultural history.

As mentioned in the introduction, this study was a pilot study. There is not much other research conducted concerning using fairy tales as tools for reflection in Flanders' education system. Therefore there is no doubt there is room for expansion and improvement of this study. The possibilities of fairy tales are far-reaching and remain highly relevant. This thesis forms an invitation to other scholars to continue with studying the potentials of fairy tales in high school education.

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

## 7 Reference list

Bacchilega, C.

2013. *Fairy tales transformed? Twenty first century adaptations and the politics of wonder*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

2010. *Postmodern fairy tales: gender and narrative strategies*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bruner, J.

1991. The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18:1, 1-21. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343711> (17.11.2022)

1996. *The culture of education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

De Studio. S.d. [Visie van de school]. <https://www.destudio-oostende.be/inspiratie-motivatie> (25.01.2023)

Delic, H. & Becirovic, S. 2016. Socratic method as an approach to teaching. *European Researcher*, 111:10, 511-517. Retrieved from:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309634848\\_Socratic\\_Method\\_as\\_an\\_Approach\\_to\\_Teaching](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309634848_Socratic_Method_as_an_Approach_to_Teaching)

Grever, M. & Van Boxtel, C. 2014. *Verlangen naar tastbaar verleden*. Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren.

Hajhosseiny, M. 2012. The effect of dialogic teaching on students' critical thinking disposition. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 69: 1358-1368. Retrieved from: doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.12.073 (09.01.2023)

Joossen, V. 2007. De sprookjes van Grimm tussen orale vertelling en literaire performance. *Neerlandistiek*. Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/27710891> (19.12.2022)

Kaddoura, M. 2013. Think pair share: A teaching learning strategy to enhance students' critical thinking. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 36:4, 3-24. Retrieved from: <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/think-pair-share-teaching-learning-strategy/docview/1372123014/se-2?accountid=11077> (05.02.2023)

Merriam-Webster. 2023. [Definition fairy tale]. Retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fairy%20tale> (04.01.2023)

Onderwijsdoelen. S.d. [Secundair onderwijs - 3de graad - na modernisering]. Retrieved from: [https://onderwijsdoelen.be/modernisatie?onderwijsstructuur=SO\\_3DE\\_GRAAD](https://onderwijsdoelen.be/modernisatie?onderwijsstructuur=SO_3DE_GRAAD) (20.05.2023)

Rahman, F. 2017. The revival of local fairy tales for children education. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 7:5, 336-344. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0705.02> (28.12.2022)

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. *Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools*. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

Ryan, M.R. & Deci, E.L. 2000. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being. *American Psychologist*: 55:1, 68-78. Retrieved from: [https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000\\_RyanDeci\\_SDT.pdf](https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000_RyanDeci_SDT.pdf) (23.05.2023)

Simon, C.A. 2023. Strategy guide series: Differentiating instruction, <https://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/making-connections> (19.04.2023).

Smith, L. 2006. *Uses of heritage*. Oxon: Routledge.

Valcke, M. & Decraene, B. 2020. *Klasmanagement en reflectie: Omgaan met diversiteit in de klas*. Gent: Academia Press.

Valcke, M. & Standaert, R. 2020. *Onderwijsbeleid in Vlaanderen*. Leuven: Acco.

Valcke, M. 2019. *Krachtige leeromgevingen: Omgaan met diversiteit in de klas*. Gent: Academia Press.

Van Doorselaere, J. 2022. Eén Voor Allen,...? Omgaan met erfgoed en etnische diversiteit op school in het licht van de canonkwestie. *Tijdschrift voor onderwijsrecht en onderwijsbeleid*, (3), 182–92. Retrieved from: <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8751710> (15.11.2022)

Van Rossem, K. 2006. What is a socratic dialogue? *Filosofische praktijken*, 16:1, 48-51. Retrieved from: [https://www.socratischgesprek.be/teksten/What\\_is\\_a\\_socratic\\_dialogue.pdf](https://www.socratischgesprek.be/teksten/What_is_a_socratic_dialogue.pdf) (20.12.2022)

Willems, F. 2021. VRT NWS: <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2021/02/09/duiding-eindtermen/#:~:text=In%20de%20nieuwe%20eindtermen%20is,financi%C3%ABle%20competenties%2C%20ondernemingszin%20en%20burgerschap>. (24.05.2023)

Zipes, J.

2011. The meaning of fairy tale within the evolution of culture. *Marvels & tales*, 25(2), 221–243. Retrieved from: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/462732> (29.12.2022)

2012. *Fairy tales and the art of subversion: The classical genre for children and the process of civilization*. Oxon: Routledge.

2017. Once upon a time: Changing the world through storytelling. *Storytelling, Self, Society*, 13:1, 33-53. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13110/storselfsoci.13.1.0033> (27.12.2022)

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

## 8 Addenda

### 8.1 Reflection sheet

#### 8.1.1 Reflection sheet empty

Reflectie workshop (Reflection workshop)

1. Wat zal je onthouden van de sessie? (What will you remember of this session?)

2. Wat heb je bijgeleerd? (What did you learn?)

3. Ik vond het saai/leuk/interessant/nieuw/nutteloos (omcirkel) (I think this was boring/fun/interesting/new/useless)

#### 8.1.2 Negative reflection sheet

Reflectie workshop

1. Wat zal je onthouden van de sessie?  
De laatste opdracht was creatief, maar ik snap niet waarom we hem deden.

2. Wat heb je bijgeleerd?  
Quasi niets.

3. Ik vond het saai/leuk/interessant/nieuw/nutteloos (omcirkel)

Translation:

1. What will you remember of this session?  
The last assignment (creating a countertale) was creative, but I do not understand why we did this.
2. What did you learn?  
Almost nothing.
3. I think this was boring/fun/interesting/new/useless.

Note: Please respect the author's rights when using this dissertation, and use the following reference:

Vermeulen, A. 2023. Once upon a classroom : A project exploring how fairy tales can be used as a tool for reflection in high schools. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.