

# Opinion / Argument Unit:

## Folktales, Fairy Tales, Myths & Legends

### Teacher Guide



This unit consists of a series of short opinion writing prompts that supplement **3rd Grade Benchmark Literacy Curriculum Unit 2: Ways Characters Shape Stories**. The Benchmark unit uses folktales, fairy tales, myths and legends to explore the central / guiding question of: How do our actions influence our lives?

While the stories explored in the unit are narrative in nature, the themes of actions and consequences, plot versus character driven stories, lessons learned from stories, etc. provide excellent opportunities to practice opinion writing with low-stake, routine writing. By engaging with these different genres, educators can encourage students to express their opinions and connect their own experiences to the themes present in the stories.

Teachers who do not have access to the Benchmark Curriculum can use this unit alongside existing classroom resources that focus on folktales, fairy tales, myths and legends; use or adapt the prompts to include opinion writing in other literature units; and/or use the prompts as stand-alone prompts to practice opinion writing throughout the school year. The lessons can be adapted to various grade levels and learning environments, making them versatile tools for developing and practicing writing skills. Additionally, by focusing on the overarching question about the influence of actions, teachers can create meaningful discussions that resonate with students' lives, thus enhancing their engagement and understanding. This approach not only cultivates writing proficiency, but also promotes a deeper appreciation for storytelling throughout various cultures.

**Lessons with Stand-Alone Writing Prompt:** pre-writing, 3, 6, 9

**Lessons with Text-Based Writing Prompt:** 1, 8, 10, post-unit

*\* Additional writing prompts related to folktales, fairy tales and/or other works of fiction at the conclusion of this guide. These prompts could work as replacements or additional writing opportunities embedded within the unit or as stand-alone prompts used for regular, low-stakes writing opportunities throughout the school year.*

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#### Pre-Writing

Explain to students that while we are reading and learning about various folktales, fairy tales, etc. in this unit, we will also be practicing our opinion and argument writing skills. Before the unit start, students activate prior knowledge by writing to one or both prompts:

In your opinion, do you think it's more fun to read about real people or make-believe characters like fairies, giants, or talking animals? Why? Tell us about your favorite kind of story and why you like it. Write at least one paragraph stating your opinion, including detailed reasons for your opinion, and including a summary sentence.

In your opinion, what is your favorite story and why do you love it so much? Tell us all about the characters, the setting, and what makes this story special to you. Write at least one paragraph stating your opinion, include detailed reasons for your opinion, and a summary sentence.

#### Mini-Lesson 1: Character Analysis

**Objective:** Students will analyze characters in traditional stories to understand how their actions impact the plot.

**Activity:** Choose a well-known character from a traditional tale (e.g., Cinderella, the Big Bad Wolf, Jack from Jack and the Beanstalk). Create a character chart with columns for: character's name, physical appearance, personality traits, actions, and impact on the story. Have students fill out the chart as a class.

**Discussion:** Discuss how the character's actions influenced the plot. Ask questions like, "How would the story have been different if Cinderella hadn't gone to the ball?" or "What if the Big Bad Wolf had been kind to the Three Little Pigs?"

#### Writing Prompt:

**What Do You Think: Is it more important for a story to have interesting characters or exciting events?**

Write at least one paragraph explaining which you think is more important for a good story. Be sure to give examples from a favorite book or story to support your opinion, and be sure to include a summary sentence.

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### Mini-Lesson 2: The Power of Words

**Objective:** Students will explore the impact of language choices on opinion writing.

**Activity:** Read aloud a short opinion piece about a character's actions. Identify strong and weak language choices. Discuss how different word choices can change the tone and impact of the writing.

**Practice:** Provide students with a simple sentence about a character's action (e.g., "The wolf ate the pig"). Ask them to rewrite the sentence using different words to create different effects (e.g., "The greedy wolf devoured the innocent pig").

**Writing Connection:** Remind students to use strong, descriptive language when writing their opinions about character actions.

### Mini-Lesson 3: Supporting Your Opinion With Details

**Objective:** Students will learn how to use evidence from the text to support their opinions.

**Activity:** Choose a short section from a traditional tale. Identify key details about a character's actions and the consequences. Create a graphic organizer with two columns: "Character's Actions" and "Consequences."

**Discussion:** Explain that evidence is like proof that supports an opinion. Show students how to use information from the graphic organizer as evidence to support an opinion about the character's actions.

**Writing Connection:** Remind students to use evidence from the story to support their opinions in their writing.

### What Do You Think: What makes a character a true hero?

Think about the stories we have read and other stories / fairy tales you know. Write at least one-paragraph about what you think makes a character a hero. Use specific examples from tales we've read or you heard somewhere else to show what makes your character a hero.

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#### Mini-Lesson 4: Organization Matters

**Objective:** Students will learn how to organize their opinion writing.

**Activity:** Introduce the basic structure of an opinion piece: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Use a familiar story as an example. Create a visual organizer to show the structure.

**Practice:** Provide students with a list of ideas about a character's actions. Have them brainstorm how to organize these ideas into paragraphs.

**Writing Connection:** Remind students to use the organizational structure to help them write a clear and focused opinion piece.

#### Mini-Lesson 5: Midas's Wish

**Objective:** Students will analyze King Midas's wish and its consequences.

**Activity:** Read aloud the story of King Midas. Create a T-chart with "Midas's Wish" on one side and "Consequences" on the other. Fill in the chart as a class.

**Discussion:** Discuss why Midas might have wished for the golden touch. Ask questions like, "Do you think Midas's wish was a good idea?" and "What might have happened if he had thought about his wish more carefully?"

**Writing Connection:** Introduce the idea of writing an opinion about whether Midas's wish was a good or bad idea.

#### Mini-Lesson 6: Learning from Mistakes

**Objective:** Students will understand the concept of learning from mistakes and apply it to King Midas.

**Activity:** Discuss the idea of making mistakes and learning from them. Share personal examples or examples from other stories. Create a chart with two columns: "Midas's Mistakes" and "Lessons Learned."

**Discussion:** Discuss what Midas could have learned from his experience. Ask questions like, "What advice would you give Midas?" and "How can we apply this lesson to our own lives?"

**Writing Prompt** (explanatory, not opinion):

Write about a lesson you learned from making a mistake. Describe the mistake you made, what you learned and what you would do differently if you faced the same situation now.

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### Mini-Lesson 7: The Golden Touch

**Objective:** Students will explore the concept of greed and its consequences.

**Activity:** Discuss the meaning of greed. Provide examples of greed from other stories or real-life situations. Create a word web centered around the word "greed."

**Discussion:** Talk about how greed affected King Midas. Ask questions like, "Was Midas greedy?" and "How did greed change Midas's life?"

**Writing Connection:** Explain how students can use the concept of greed to support their opinions about Midas's character and actions.

### Mini-Lesson 8: If I Were King Midas

**Objective:** Students will imagine themselves in Midas's position and consider alternative actions.

**Activity:** Ask students to imagine they are King Midas. What would they do differently? Create a chart with two columns: "Midas's Actions" and "My Actions."

**Discussion:** Share students' ideas and discuss the possible consequences of their alternative actions.

**Writing Connection:** Explain how students can use their imagined scenarios to support their opinions about Midas's choices.

#### What Do You Think: Does it Matter Today?

Do you think the lesson learned about greed in King Midas is still important today? Is there another life lesson from the story that is more important? Why or why not? Give examples from the story to support your opinion. Be sure to include a summary sentence.

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### Mini-Lesson 9: Fact or Fiction?

**Objective:** Students will explore the concept of fact versus fiction and apply it to the El Chupacabra legend. [Chupacabra](#) (need to register for a free epic! account to access the book)

**Activity:** Introduce the concept of fact and fiction. Provide examples of both. Discuss what makes something a fact and what makes something fiction.

**Discussion:** Introduce the El Chupacabra. Encourage students to share what they know about the creature. Create a T-chart with "Facts" and "Fiction" columns. Fill in the chart based on class knowledge.

**Writing Prompt (use at beginning of lesson, before reading the story):**

**What Do You Think: What is the scariest creature or animal and why?**

Write at least a one paragraph opinion about a creature or an animal from a book or movie that someone would consider to be scary. In your paragraph, be sure to state your opinion, give detailed reasons for your opinion, and include a summary sentence.

### Mini-Lesson 10: Building Arguments

**Objective:** Students will learn how to build arguments using evidence and reasoning.

**Activity:** Discuss the importance of supporting an opinion with evidence. Provide examples of strong and weak arguments.

**Brainstorming:** Divide the class into two groups: those who believe in El Chupacabra and those who don't. Have each group brainstorm evidence to support their position.

**Writing Connection:** Explain that students will need to use evidence to support their opinion about the El Chupacabra.

**What do you think: Real or Not?**

Write at least one paragraph explaining why you think El Chupacabra is real or fake. Be sure to clearly state your opinion, give details supporting your opinion and provide a summary sentence.

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### Mini-Lesson 11: Considering Different Perspectives

**Objective:** Students will explore different viewpoints on the El Chupacabra legend.

**Activity:** Discuss the concept of different perspectives. Explain that people can have different opinions about the same topic.

**Role-playing:** Assign roles like scientist, eyewitness, and skeptic. Have students role-play different perspectives on the El Chupacabra.

**Writing Connection:** Explain that considering different perspectives can help strengthen an opinion.

### Mini-Lesson 12: Creating a Creature

**Objective:** Students will use their imagination to create their own mythical creature.

**Activity:** Discuss the characteristics of mythical creatures. Brainstorm ideas for new creatures.

**Creative Writing:** Have students write a short description of their creature, including its appearance, abilities, and where it might live.

**Writing Connection:** Explain how understanding the characteristics of mythical creatures can help them write about the El Chupacabra.

### Revisiting & Reflecting

As the unit concludes, revisit the writing prompt from day one and ask the students to reconsider their opinion/argument writing about the importance of plot vs characters. It is not important that students have changed their minds about the importance of plot vs character, but instead the focus should be on providing details and evidence from the text(s) to support their opinions.

**What Do You Think: Is it more important for a story to have interesting characters or exciting events?**

Write at least one paragraph explaining which you think is more important for a good story. Give examples from at least one of the stories we have read together in class to support your opinion, and be sure to include a summary sentence.

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Below is a set of sample opinion writing prompts connected to folktales, fairy tales, myths, and legends. The prompts do not follow the Forward Exam format with the expectation that norms for length and formality will be established as part of classroom expectations or instructed with individual writing activities.

#### Sample Writing Prompts:

- Do you think the lesson learned (the importance of sharing, don't judge a book by its cover, etc..) in [Favorite FolkTale/Myth/Story] is still important today? Is there another life lesson that is important? Why or why not? Give examples to support your opinion.
- What do you think is the most important lesson to learn from (insert story title)? What evidence from the text supports your opinion?
- If you could change the ending of [Favorite FolkTale/Myth/Story], how would you change it? Why do you think your ending would be better?
- Which magical power from our stories would you want and why?
- Is it ever okay to disobey rules like some characters do in fairy tales? Explain.
- What's the most important lesson you've learned from a folk tale? Why?
- Which mythical creature would make the best pet? Why?
- Should characters in stories always get a "happily ever after"? Why or why not?
- What's your opinion on the role of magic in solving problems in fairy tales?
- Which legend do you think is most believable? Why?
- Is it better to be clever or kind in fairy tales? Support your opinion.
- What's your opinion on how villains are portrayed in the stories we've read?
- Should all stories teach a lesson? Why or why not?
- Which character from our story(ies) would you want as a friend? Why?
- Are the consequences in fairy tales usually fair? Explain your view.
- What's your opinion on the role of fate versus choice in myths?
- Which type of tale (folk, fairy, myth, or legend) do you think is most valuable? Why?