

The Bremen Town Musicians

Teacher's Kit

Contents:

1. The Bremen Town Musicians: Original Story by the Brothers Grimm
2. Fact Sheet
3. The Bremen Town Musicians: Reading Comprehension
4. Fractured Fairy Tale Generator: Introduction & Worksheet
5. Fractured Fairy Tale Generator: Lesson Plan Ideas
6. Art & Music Activities: Instrument Making Ideas

The Bremen Town Musicians

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

A man had a donkey, who for long years had untiringly carried sacks to the mill, but whose strength was now failing, so that he was becoming less and less able to work. Then his master thought that he would no longer feed him, but the donkey noticed that it was not a good wind that was blowing and ran away, setting forth on the road to Bremen, where he thought he could become a town musician. When he had gone a little way he found a hunting dog lying in the road, who was panting like one who had run himself tired.

"Why are you panting so, Grab-Hold?" asked the donkey.

"Oh," said the dog, "because I am old and am getting weaker every day and can no longer go hunting, my master wanted to kill me, so I ran off; but now how should I earn my bread?"

"Do you know what," said the donkey, "I am going to Bremen and am going to become a town musician there. Come along and take up music too. I'll play the lute, and you can beat the drums."

The dog was satisfied with that, and they went further. It didn't take long, before they came to a cat sitting by the side of the road and making a face like three days of rainy weather. "What has crossed you, old Beard-Licker?" said the donkey.

"Oh," answered the cat, "who can be cheerful when his neck is at risk? I am getting on in years, and my teeth are getting dull, so I would rather sit behind the stove and purr than to chase around after mice. Therefore my mistress wanted to drown me, but I took off. Now good advice is scarce. Where should I go?"

"Come with us to Bremen. After all, you understand night music. You can become a town musician there." The cat agreed and went along.

Then the three refugees came to a farmyard, and the rooster of the house was sitting on the gate crying with all his might.

"Your cries pierce one's marrow and bone," said the donkey. "What are you up to?"

"I just prophesied good weather," said the rooster, "because it is Our Dear Lady's Day, when she washes the Christ Child's shirts and wants to dry them; but because Sunday guests are coming tomorrow, the lady of the house has no mercy and told the cook that she wants to eat me tomorrow in the soup, so I am supposed to let them cut off my head this evening. Now I am going to cry at the top of my voice as long as I can."

"Hey now, Red-Head," said the donkey, "instead come away with us. We're going to Bremen. You can always find something better than death. You have a good voice, and when we make music together, it will be very pleasing."

The rooster was happy with the proposal, and all four went off together. However, they could not reach the city of Bremen in one day, and in the evening they came into a forest, where they would spend the night. The donkey and the dog lay down under a big tree, but the cat and the rooster took to the branches. The rooster flew right to the top, where it was safest for him. Before falling asleep he looked around once again in all four directions, and he thought that he saw a little spark burning in the distance. He hollered to his companions, that there must be a house not too far away, for a light was shining.

The donkey said, "Then we must get up and go there, because the lodging here is poor." The dog said that he could do well with a few bones with a little meat on them. Thus they set forth toward the place where the light was, and they soon saw it glistening more brightly, and it became larger and larger, until they came to the front of a brightly lit robbers' house.

The donkey, the largest of them, approached the window and looked in.

"What do you see, Gray-Horse?" asked the rooster.

"What do I see?" answered the donkey. "A table set with good things to eat and drink, and robbers sitting there enjoying themselves."

"That would be something for us," said the rooster.

"Ee-ah, ee-ah, oh, if we were there!" said the donkey.

Then the animals discussed how they might drive the robbers away, and at last they came upon a plan. The donkey was to stand with his front feet on the window, the dog to jump on the donkey's back, the cat to climb onto the dog, and finally the rooster would fly up and sit on the cat's head. When they had done that, at a signal they began to make their music all together. The donkey brayed, the dog barked, the cat meowed and the rooster crowed. Then they crashed through the window into the room, shattering the panes.

The robbers jumped up at the terrible bellowing, thinking that a ghost was coming in, and fled in great fear out into the woods. Then the four companions seated themselves at the table and freely partook of the leftovers, eating as if they would get nothing more for four weeks.

When the four minstrels were finished, they put out the light and looked for a place to sleep, each according to his nature and his desire. The donkey lay down on the manure pile, the dog behind the door, the cat on the hearth next to the warm ashes, and the rooster sat on the beam of the roof. Because they were tired from their long journey, they soon fell asleep.

When midnight had passed and the robbers saw from the distance that the light was no longer burning in the house, and everything appeared to be quiet, the captain said, "We shouldn't have let ourselves be chased off," and he told one of them to go back and investigate the house. The one they sent found everything still, and went into the kitchen to strike a light. He mistook the cat's glowing, fiery eyes for live coals, and held a sulfur match next to them, so that it would catch fire. But the cat didn't think this was funny and jumped into his face, spitting, and scratching.

He was terribly frightened and ran toward the back door, but the dog, who was lying there, jumped up and bit him in the leg. When he ran across the yard past the manure pile, the donkey gave him a healthy blow with his hind foot, and the rooster, who had been awakened from his sleep by the noise and was now alert, cried down from the beam, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Then the robber ran as fast as he could back to his captain and said, "Oh, there is a horrible witch sitting in the house, she blew at me and scratched my face with her long fingers. And there is a man with a knife standing in front of the door, and he stabbed me in the leg. And a black monster is lying in the yard, and it struck at me with a wooden club. And the judge is sitting up there on the roof, and he was calling out, 'Bring the rascal here.' Then I did what I could to get away."

From that time forth, the robbers did not dare go back into the house. However, the four Bremen Musicians liked it so well there, that they never left it again. And the person who just told that, his mouth is still warm.

-
- Source: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten*, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales -- Grimms' Fairy Tales), final edition (1857), no. 27.

The Bremen Town Musicians

Fact Sheet

The Bremen Town Musicians is an early Grimm's' fairy tale dating back to 1812. The Brothers Grimm, Jakob (Jan 4, 1785 - Sept 20, 1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (Feb 24, 1786 - Dec 16, 1859), were German academics who researched existing folktales, and wrote their own collections of fairy tales. They published some of the world's best known stories, including *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel*, *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *The Bremen Town Musicians*.

The North-West German City of Bremen is very proud of the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, and today there are many statues, paintings, and sculptures of the four musicians across the city. The best-known representation of *The Bremen Town Musicians* is the internationally acclaimed bronze sculpture by Gerhard Marcks dating from 1951. It stands on the western side of the town hall, and is a major tourist attraction. Local legend says that touching the front hooves of the Donkey makes your wish come true.



Photo by the City of Bremen, Germany.

<http://www.bremen-tourism.de/btz/english/k4-download.cfm?m=5.04&name=Downloads>

Follow this link to the City of Bremen Website, and download the computer generated Bremen Town Musicians jigsaw puzzle!

Modern Interpretations

The Bremen Town Musicians is a story told throughout the world. Since its first publication in German, it has been translated into many languages. Modern interpretations span many media including books, plays, movies, puppetry, musicals and animation. Here are some examples you may wish to view:

- Jim Henson produced a Muppet version for television called *The Muppet Musicians of Bremen*. In Henson's version the Donkey, Dog, Cat, and Rooster were played by puppets, the setting was the American south with banjo bluegrass music, swamps, and southern accents.
- In the Soviet Union, the story was loosely adapted into an animated musical in 1969 by Vasily Livanov at the studio Soyuzmultfilm. In 2000, a new 56-minute adaptation of the original film was made in Russia called *The New Bremen Musicians*, and was very successful.
- Animated feature films based on *The Bremen Town Musicians* have also been made in Spain in 1989, directed by Cruz Delgado, and Germany in 1997, renamed as *The Fearless Four*.
- *The Bremen Town Musicians* has also been interpreted into different cartoons. In America, on the Cartoon Network, there are cartoon shorts (called *Wedgies*) of an animal band called *The Bremen Avenue Experience* featuring a cat (Jessica), dog (Simon), donkey (Barret) and rooster (Tanner).
- The story has inspired numerous versions in Japan including *Mini Moni de Bremen no Ongakutai (Mini Moni's Bremen Town Musicians)*. A drama starring all-girl Japanese pop band Mini Moni. This version goes backwards in time to three different periods of Japanese history, although there are few elements of the original story in place.
- In the anime *Otogi-Jūshi Akazukin* one of the main villains is named Randagio, who is based on both the cat from *The Bremen Town Musicians* and another famous fairy tale character, *Puss in Boots*. Randagio has three assistants based on the Donkey, Dog, and Rooster and all play in a band named Bremen.
- Nippon Animation Co., Ltd. adapted the tale in the first episode of the anime TV series *Grimm Meisaku Gekijou*, released in English as *Grimm's Fairy Tale Classics*. The four main characters are also seen in the opening of the anime.

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Bremen Town Musicians

Reading Comprehension

In your own words, answer the following questions about the story of **The Bremen Town Musicians** by the Brothers Grimm.

1. What does the fairy tale tell us about ageing? Look for good and bad effects.

2. Describe all the ways in which music is a theme of the story.

3. Do you think any of the animals could have succeeded alone? Why?

4. Why do the animals set off for Bremen? What does this tell us about Bremen?

5. Where do you think the story is set?

6. How do the robbers perceive the four animals?

7. How do you think the animals feel about their owners? Do you agree?

8. Do you think the animals are courageous? Explain your answer.

9. Discuss examples of team work in the fairy tale.

10. How do you think the animals know the men in the cottage are robbers?

The Bremen Town Musicians

Fractured Fairy Tale Generator

What is a fractured fairy tale? A fractured fairy tale is a story based on a traditional fairy tale that has been changed in some way, for example, characters, setting, plot, or by injecting a humorous or magical twist.

Think about how you are going to fracture the fairy tale "The Bremen Town Musicians" to create your own contemporary and original tale.

Some options include changing the main character, or telling the story from the viewpoint of a different character. The setting or era of the tale could be varied, or the beginning and end could be changed. The characters could face different challenges, or the important items in the story could be different. Let your imagination be your guide.

Use the worksheet to help you create your own fractured fairy tale.

Worksheet for fracturing the fairy tale

The title of the traditional fairy tale is: *The Bremen Town Musicians*

The title of my fairy tale is: _____

In *The Bremen Town Musicians* the main characters are: Donkey, Dog, Cat, Rooster

In my fairy tale the main characters are: _____

In Bremen the good guys are: _____

In my story the good guys are: _____

In Bremen the bad guys are: _____

In my story the bad guys are: _____

In Bremen the setting is: _____

In my story the setting is: _____

In Bremen the story takes place [once upon a time]: _____

When my story takes place: _____

In Bremen the story is told from the point of view of: _____

My story is told from the point of view of: _____

The Bremen Town Musicians begins with: _____

My story begins with: _____

The problem to be solved in Bremen is: _____

The problem to be solved in my story is: _____

The theme of Bremen is: _____

The theme of my story is: _____

The plot of Bremen is: _____

The plot of my story is: _____

The ending of Bremen is when: _____

The ending of my story is when: _____

Now write the story and create your very own original fractured fairy tale!

Fractured Fairy Tale Generators

Lesson Plan Ideas

Exquisite Corpse

This is a game created by the Surrealists, and is a wonderful way to create fractured fairy tales with a class.

Take one A4 sheet of paper and fold 5 times. Divide the class into groups of 5.

Each of the 5 students writes part of the fractured fairy tale:

- 1 beginning
- 2 setting
- 3 characters
- 4 plot
- 5 solution.

The paper is unfolded and they work as a team to link the 5 parts and complete the tale before presenting it to the class. For an ART CLASS, the students could also draw a picture for each of the 5 parts of the fairy tale rather than writing them. The presentation for either a written or drawn Exquisite Corpse could take many forms, for example they could:

- make book
- perform play
- make puppet
- make poster
- make book cover

Fairy Tale Traditions: Compare and Analyse

To help students create their own fairy tales (fractured or otherwise), a lesson dedicated to reading, analyzing, and discussing fairy tale traditions could be useful. As a class you could:

- study fairy tales from other cultures
- compare fairy tales, myths and legends and define them all
- why are there no Australian fairy tales in the European tradition?
- examine surreal Australian children's stories such as Blinky Bill, Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot, The Magic Pudding, Tiddylick the Frog, Dot and the Kangaroo and think about how they compare with traditional fairy tales
- classify fairy tales into two types: those where the main characters use their own skills compared with those that rely on magical characters and events.
- examine the gender, vices and good qualities of good and bad guys in a selection of fairy tales. Are there cultural differences?

Group Work Poster

5 students write a fractured fairy tale each concentrating on one part:

- 1 Beginning
- 2 hero or heroine
- 3 villain
- 4 plot
- 5 ending.

Each student draws a significant event from the fairy tale on A4 sheet. The printed story is placed on the large poster and this is surrounded by the five A4 drawings in whatever configuration pleases the students.

Think of art works inspired by myths such as Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus' and ask children to create their own work of art inspired by a significant event in a fairy tale.

The Bremen Town Musicians

Instrument Making Ideas

Here are some simple ideas to make instruments from household and recycled objects:

Rubber Band Guitar

Using a sturdy box with a lid, cut a circle in the top for the sound hole. Stretch rubber bands, or elastic (e.g. hat elastic) around the box and lift elastic up off the box with pencils each end to avoid buzzing. Discuss the effect of different lengths of elastic, different thickness, and different tensions and how it affects pitch. Explain similarities with guitars and violins and other string instruments.

Coffee Jar Lid Prayer Drum

Cut the ends off 2 balloons then stretch them over 2 large coffee lids. Tape a pencil to the back of one, to act as a handle, then attach a string to the pencil and on each end of the string, place a small bead. (Make sure the bead is placed in the right spot, so that when it swings around, it will hit the balloon). Attach the 2 coffee lids together with tape, enclosing the pencil. Put pencil between palms and rub together. The string and beads should swing around to hit the balloons on either side, producing a great sound. Discuss effect of tightness of balloons on the pitch and volume of sound. Discuss applications to other instruments e.g.: tambours, drums etc.

Straw Recorder

Cut ends of straws in a "V" shape and flatten them. Blowing hard into the flattened end will produce sound. Experiment with the length of straws. Discuss relationship between length and pitch. Discuss how the length of air the columns affect the sound in things like recorders etc.

Bottle Maracas

Fill drink bottles with different objects, pens and pencils, buttons, rice, etc. Try putting table tennis balls into a plastic water bottle cut in half, then tape the bottle closed and decorate. It's amazing how many kids can't work out how the balls got in there! Talk about volume and texture of sound.

Water Jars

Find a collection of jars and experiment until you can create a collection of notes then paint the water level on the outside so you will know next time. Get the kids to arrange the jars in order from lowest to highest pitch. Tap jars and play "Mary had a little lamb" or "Twinkle little star" etc. Discuss the effect of depth of water, container size and shape, glass thickness, etc. How do they affect the pitch? Experiment with identical containers too!