



Work discussion **A**pproach in primary schools  
Teachers observe **CH**ildren

## «*Introduction to the Art of inventing stories*»

Freely adapted from : *The Grammar of Fantasy* by Gianni Rodari.

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A word that we "throw at random" in our mind, produces waves in surface and in depth , causes an endless series of chain reactions, involving in its fall sounds and images, analogies and memories, meanings and dreams, with a movement that affects experience and memory, fantasy and unconscious and that is complicated by the fact that the same mind does not passively assist the representation, but it continuously intervenes, for accepting and rejecting, for connecting and censoring, for building and destroying.

- ▶ Rodari's "Grammar of Fantasy" offers the richest and the most original resource of techniques to activate creativity. Among them, the use of the "Fantastic Binomial" is very effective.
- ▶ The Fantastic Binomial is considered a basic notion among the techniques described by Rodari "to put words and images into motion". According to Rodari, a story can only come from a fantastic binomial, a combination of concepts that can be made up of two very different words.

The two words, therefore, are not chosen for their usual meaning but they are unrelated, a little "confused", they are thrown to one another: in this way they will be in the best conditions to generate a story.

*Thus, it is good to choose the fantastic binomial with the help of the hazard.*

Rodari: "there must be a certain distance between the two words, it is necessary that one is sufficiently extraneous to the other, and their combination must be discreetly unusual so that imagination is forced to set in motion for establishing a kinship between them, for building a (fantastic) set in which the two extraneous elements can coexist".

► FOR EXAMPLE:

Rodari: «Do you want to see how you can invent a tale of happy jokes? Here you have, I'll give you the recipe, it's like how to make a special soup. 1. Take two words, the first two that come to your mind. Example: Plant and Slipper. 2. Mix them and you will have the title: "THE SLIPPER PLANT".

Take a look at the new object in front of you. 3. A common plant; let's say it's a pear tree. But among the leaves, instead of the fruits, here that they are making their appearance, a good-natured and a little awkward appearance, the slippers, indeed different types of slippers: blue, red, yellow; with bows, ribbons, shiny buckles; for children, for patients, for retired old women, for mischievous grandparents. 4. Place this rich and strange tree in a place of your choice. For example, on a hill among other trees that have preserved the fruits that were created to give, in the midst of peaceful pear and apple trees you find this bizarre tree, this unexpected tree.

Put some people around. 5. At least the owner of the tree, and his wife, heck! The owner of the tree is the farmer who comes up whistling along the path, with a basket: He is happy because the weather is good, because he's pulling the pipe that is a pleasure and he already feels the basket full of beautiful pears which will fill it soon. What's his name?.....Antonio. 6. Now ... let Antonio walk, and the imagination behind him. It's time to let the imagination free, to believe all the incredible things that it will show us, and to keep these things well in mind so we can tell them to the little children, to our brothers who still go to the kindergarten with the chocolate in the basket. They will listen to us with their eyes wide open, we could go on telling the stories until tonight and they will not get tired.

- ▶ In the child's mind, throughout the story, there is a "separate work". The commitment on the echoes of certain words produces a reverberation that recalls the word to the image. When a child is placed in a creative situation, the basic materials he/she uses are: his/her experience, his/her intimate needs, his/her world of values, the words he/she knows, his/her memories, games, readings, etc.
- ▶ Family and social models emerge, which are reflected in the concept of right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness: unconsciously, he/she can express his/her conflicts, symbolize his/her fears, his/her relations with his/her parents, his/her uncertainties and his/her joys. The emotional baggage of the child emerges in all its "truth", although in an atmosphere of play and invention.
- ▶ The ultimate aim is to stimulate, through the use of fairy tales, a creative vision of one's own Self: the word becomes the means of expression, the imagination is its driving force.

- ▶ Like all the experiences of life, fairy tales have a beginning, a development and an end. They state that the time of life is rhythmized by fundamental events that mark a before and an after. They designate the existence of an external and internal aspect of reality and that we mustn't stop to the appearance because it does not always correspond to the substance of things.
- ▶ Fairytales help us find the hidden truth: meanings vary according to people and moments of life and each one can use them in its own way.

In the second phase of the project, starting from the choice of the words, it will be proposed to the children to develop new stories by considering the five "golden rules" to write a fairy tale:

- ▶ 1) to choose a long time ago
- ▶ 2) to describe the good and evil characters
- ▶ 3) challenges to overcome and events that are repeated
- ▶ 4) presence of a magical element
- ▶ 5) a positive ending

Suggestions for the ending... which may be:

- ▶ circular (restoring the initial equilibrium);
- ▶ into effect (inserting an element that turns the story upside down);
- ▶ positive (but not necessarily ...);
- ▶ open (the story might even ... do not end!)

The work could be divided according to the following (flexible) scheme:

- ▶ 1 meeting, to play on the fantastic binomial, to stimulate the development of possible titles, to choose in a group a binomial.
- ▶ 2 meeting, invention of the fairy tale in group according to the «five golden rules».
- ▶ 3 meeting, drawings on the fairy tale and discussion in group with pupils.

For the next three meetings, you can repeat the same method for a second story.

*"... it's time to let fantasy out, to believe in all the amazing things that it will tell us"*

*‘The fairy tale is the space of all hypotheses:  
it can give us the keys to enter reality in new ways,  
it can help the child to know the world.’*

*Good Work to all of you!*

edited by

