

Genie-us

Key and Teachers' Notes

This kit is one of a series of 'quick' kits from BritLit. These means that the stories used are very short (between 300 and 500 words only) and the materials can be used in a maximum of two 90 minute lessons or, with some omissions, a single lesson plus homework.

Whichever approach you decide to take we advise you most strongly to always include the PRE-READING ACTIVITIES. These are an essential part of the process. You can then pick and choose from the CONTEXT and WORD WORK sections to suit your own needs.

Be sure to use the Reading activity itself after the pre-reading activities have been completed, and use the recording of the author reading the story to reinforce the reading activity. Our suggestion is that you ask the students to read the text in class rather than at home, and when you have allowed time for all the students to read in a time that is comfortable to them, you then play the recording with the students reading as they listen. Later on, perhaps as a final activity, you can get the students to listen to the story without reading the text. This will reinforce the pleasure derived from understanding a native speaker without prompts.

We further suggest that the class activities are not ended with Word Work activities, but with a student focussed activity or the listening exercise just mentioned.

Fitch O'Connell
Porto
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Pre-reading

1. Write the title of the story 'Genie-us' on the board and ask students to speculate on a) what the story they are about to hear might be about and b) why the title has obviously been adapted from Genius (a clever genie?)

4. Vocabulary

wicked	very bad
rushed	went very quickly
chuckled	laughed quietly
the cheek of it	impertinence
poor as a church mouse	in poverty
weedy	weak, pathetic looking
struggled up	climbed with difficulty
slippery	easy to fall over; feet slide
hideaway	place of concealment
burst out	emerged quickly
snorted	a noise of contempt
grabbed	hold strongly
fed up with	don't want any more
strode	walk with confidence
creep	insignificant person

Context

1. Fairytales

When the story of 'Genie-us' starts we think it is going to be a normal fairy tale. We all know a normal way a fairy tale, 'Once upon a time' type stories, are supposed to end. This particular one is supposed to have the hero – a peasant or a prince – fighting against evil things (dragons, witches, giants, magicians etc) to finally (and **heroically**) defeat a rival or rivals, take the treasure back to the king and win the princess's hand in marriage with the **blessing** of her father, the king. Naturally, the peasant or prince will be young and handsome and **extremely** brave and clever and the princess will be very beautiful and graceful, with perfect manners and probably spend her days combing her long, long hair in front of a mirror or leaning out of a window.

The fact that 'Genie-us' doesn't follow this pattern – it does almost the opposite – is part of the story's charm. But why is it we all know what is *supposed* to happen? Where does this knowledge come from?

Fairytales have been around in Europe for a long time. **Originally** they were all part of a long oral tradition of folk tales and one generation after another told the tales to the next generation and so on. It wasn't until about 300 years ago that any of these stories were **written** down, though most weren't collected and put into books until the nineteenth century.

These stories were usually handed down by women in the family, not men. They were, in fact, women's stories at a time when women's voices were not supposed to be heard and when censorship was very strong. The **political** system in Europe at the time was very unfair with many injustices, and these stories were a way of protesting about the very real problems most people faced in life. The stories, therefore, were metaphors about wrongs being righted and justice prevailing.

The power of the protest is such that we still know the basic structure of these stories today. Whether they **actually** managed to make wrong things right in the real world is quite another matter, but one thing we do know is that when these stories came to be written down, the really cruel and gruesome parts were left out!

2. Story making

The instructions are quite straightforward. The object of the exercise is to get students to create their own stories, imagining they are for telling to a younger audience. The restriction of the number of pictures from each column is to create some semblance of guided writing, ensuring that sufficient elements for a narrative to emerge are created but also limiting the exercise within acceptable parameters. Students can work in pairs or small groups to create the stories. They should be encouraged not to write down every word but to rely on making notes so that the story can be retold fresh each time. They should be given an opportunity to tell their story to the rest of the class, using the flashcards provided (see additional file) if required.

Word Work

1. b) *The poor man cried that he loved the princess and would brave any peril for her.*
2. b) *The king said that the poor man must fetch the magic lamp that a wicked rival had stolen from him.*
3. b) *The genie asked who he was*
4. b) *The poor man replied that he was a poor man who loved the princess*
5. b) *The king said to his daughter that that (or the genie) was her future husband.*

SPECIAL NOTE

We are deeply indebted to Oxford University Press which has given permission for use of this story, which first appeared in 'Short and Scary', 2002

To read the rest of the stories in this collection, go to

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Short-Scary-Louise-Cooper/dp/0192781901/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1198413390&sr=1-1

For further classroom activities based on stories by Louise Cooper, go to www.britlitworld.com