



Lesson Extensions and Activities for *Hansel and Gretel*

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Reading Is Fundamental

Google Voyager Folktales Unit

Book Description

Hansel and Gretel are abandoned in the forest by their poor parents. The starving children happen upon a mouthwatering candy house where they meet its inhabitant, an old woman with a unique appetite. Will the children escape with their lives or will they end up becoming a part of the woman's feast?

Folktale Background

The tale of Hansel and Gretel, or "Little Brother and Little Sister," was one of the first oral ones that the Brothers Grimm collected. Tales like this one, which includes a family's children being left in the woods or forest, are believed to have been developed in the medieval period of the Great Famine (1315-1321), when hard times drove many parents to very desperate measures. ([Source](#))

Vocabulary

Anxious – Feeling great unease.

Gnarled – Bent and rough, especially because of old age.

Morsel – A small bite of food.

Stall – An individual, enclosed compartment for an animal in a stable or barn.

Kneading – Making something into a dough with your hands.

Cauldron – A large metal pot with a handle and a lid.

Crayfish – A small crustacean that resembles a lobster.

Prosper – To do well financially.

Prior to Reading

- Ask students if they have heard of Germany. On chart paper, create a Venn diagram and have students share what's similar about the U.S. and Germany and what's unique to each. Note students' answers even if they're incorrect as you will go back and discuss the answers after learning more about Germany.
- Walk students through the Germany [Google Voyager Experience](#). Students will learn about where the story is set. Add additional notes to the Venn diagram as you walk through the experience.
- Share with students that this is a folktale set in Germany. Ask if they've heard any other stories set in Germany and call on volunteers to share.

While Reading

- Stop reading on the page that says, “Then he went back inside, lay down beside his little sister, and fell asleep.” Ask the students to guess what Hansel plans to do with the pebbles.
- Stop reading on the page that says, “Why are you always stopping and looking back?” Ask students to guess why Hansel is always stopping and looking back.
- Stop reading on the page that says, “Wait just a little longer, until the moon is up.” Ask students to predict if the parents will come back for Hansel and Gretel.
- Stop reading on the page that says, “But their mother was angry.” Ask the students to explain why the father was happy and the mother was angry.
- Stop reading on the page that says, “My boy, why are you always stopping and peering back at the house?” Ask students to guess why Hansel keeps stopping and peering back at the house.
- Stop reading on the page that says, “Once you’re inside you can take a good look.” Ask the students to guess what the old woman has planned for Gretel.

Post Reading Activities

- Lead a discussion about the tale. Ask students such questions as:
 - If you were Hansel and Gretel’s father, what would you do?
 - Why do Hansel and Gretel’s parents leave them in the woods?
 - If you came across a candy house like the one that Hansel and Gretel found and the owner invited you inside, what would you do?
 - If you were in Gretel’s position when the old woman shares her plans to eat Hansel, what would you do?
 - How does Gretel save the day?
- Have students complete the Criss Cross, Memory Matching, and Word Search puzzles about *Hansel and Gretel* on RIF’s Literacy Central (<https://www.rif.org/literacy-central>).

Lesson Extensions and Activities

Here are some ways to further explore the story:

Primary Standard for all activities: RL.K.10 (Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.)

- **Math** – Hansel and Gretel have to find their own way through the woods by following pebbles. Their journey would have been easier with a map! Have students practice using a map to measure distances between places in Germany, the country where the story originated.

Objective: Students will use a map and a ruler to measure represented distances.

Standards: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.2.MD.A.1 (Measure the length of an object by selecting and using appropriate tools such as rulers, yardsticks, meter sticks, and measuring tapes.)

Materials:

- A map of Germany like [this one](#)
- Rulers
- Pencils
- Paper

- **Arts** – The old woman’s house is described as “built out of bread,” with a “roof made of pancakes and its windows of sugar candy.” Have students use pieces of candy to create a representation of the house in *Hansel and Gretel*.

Objective: Students will design and create artistic works based on a description.

Standards: National Core Arts Standards, Anchor Standard #3 (Refine and complete artistic work.)

Materials:

- Candy
- Glue
- Markers
- Colored pencils
- Construction paper
- Pencils
- Magazines that can be cut
- Scissors

- **Science** – Gretel tricks the old woman into climbing into the oven. She closes the door and escapes with her brother. Do your students know that fire is not the only source of heat? Have them complete [this solar oven experiment from Scientific American](#) to learn more about alternative sources of heat.

Objective: Students will explore how heat can be conducted by multiple sources.

Standards: NSES Physical Science Standards Levels K-4 (Light, heat, electricity, and magnetism.)

Materials:

- Pizza box
- Pencils
- Ruler
- Utility knife (will require adult supervision)
- Aluminum foil
- White school glue
- Plastic wrap
- Shipping tape or black electrical tape
- A sheet of black paper
- A wooden skewer or pencil
- A warm, sunny day (above 85 degrees Fahrenheit is recommended and the hotter the better)
- Graham crackers, marshmallows and a chocolate bar

- **Writing** – When Hansel and Gretel return home, their father is very excited to see them. Write a letter from the father to Hansel and Gretel that apologizes for leaving them in the woods and describes what happened while they were at the old woman’s house.

Objective: Students will recall details from a book to write from a character’s perspective.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3 (Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.)

Materials:

- Journals
- Pens