THE ART OF STORYTELLING FOR CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

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SUMMARY

Understanding and appreciating other cultures has long been a goal of many early childhood education programs. Yet, helping children develop an understanding and appreciation of other cultures is not easily achieved. The purpose of this study was to examine the use of fairytales and storytelling with young children to promote cultural understanding and peace education. We were interested specifically in understanding how children in a rural school in America would understand a Kuwaiti fairytale. After hearing two versions of the Cinderella tale, a familiar version and a Kuwaiti version, the children wrote their own story. The children's stories reflected elements from both fairytales, yet showed each child's unique interpretation of major themes, thus creating a dialogical narrative. Such experiences, we believe, can promote children's understandings and appreciation of other cultures.

RÉSUMÉ

La compréhension et l'appréciation d'autres cultures est, depuis longtemps, un objectif de nombreux programmes d'éducation des jeunes enfants. Aider les jeunes enfants à acquérir cette compréhension et cette appréciation n'est cependant pas unt tâche aisée. Cette étude s'est fixé pour but d'examiner l'utilisation des contes dans le but de favoriser la connaissance d'autres cultures et l'éducation à la paix chez les jeunes enfants. Nous avons étudié en particulier comment des enfants d'une école rurale aux Etats-Unis pouvaient comprendre un conte de fée du Koweit. Après avoir entendu raconter deux versions du conte de Cendrillon, l'une familière, l'autre koweitienne, les enfants ont rédigé leur propre version de l'histoire. Les textes des enfants reflètent des éléments de deux sources, tout en mettant en évidence que chaque enfant avait interprété les principaux thèmes de façon unique et personnelle, créant de la sorte un récit dialogique. Nous pensons que de telles exercices peuvent favoriser chez les enfants une connaissance et une appréciation de cultures différentes.

RESUMEN

Comprender y valorar otras culturas ha sido por largo tiempo el objetivo de muchos programas de educación para niños. Sin embargo, ayudar a que los niños desarrollen una comprensión y valoración de otras culturas no se logra facilmente. El propósito de este estudio fue examinar el uso de cuentos e historias para promover una comprensión cultural y una enseñanza de la paz en los niños. Nuestro interés específico fue entender cómo niños de una escuela rural en Estados Unidos comprenderían un cuento Kuwaití. Después de escuchar dos versiones del cuento de la Cenicienta, la versión común y la versión Kuwaití, los niños escribieron su propio cuento. Los cuentos de los niños reflejaron elementos de las dos versiones del cuento, mostraron la interpretación de los temas centrales de cada niño y por lo tanto, crearon una narrativa de diálogo. Este tipo de experiencias, creemos, puede promover en los niños la comprensión y la valoración de otras culturas.

KEYWORDS: Cross-cultural, Story-telling, Fairy Tales, Literature

INTRODUCTION

Suransky (1992) in The Erosion of Childhood, emphasizes the importance of art saying that, "in order to seek other possibilities for meaning, another explanatory language that speaks to the landscape of childhood" can capture the moments of wonder for the child (p. 40). Stories in particular provide an excellent medium for expression. Stories provide a rich language full of expressive and creative possibilities giving children an outlet for their experiences in their own world without any adult intervention or interpretation of that experience. Indeed, adults often fail to understand the fantasy world of children, and thus, they may destroy one important element that characterizes the world of children, namely, imagination.

Similarly, Suransky (1992) also comments on the power of play. She suggests that children should have a social space in our technological era, a space in which they are invited to explore and discover the world. It is through play that the child restructures, devises, and transforms his or her existence into reality. Children come to terms with themselves through discovery play. In addition, in order for our children to fully develop their individual identities, they must experience their world in a dialectical manner and thereby be allowed the freedom to disobey. Freedom to disobey means that the child first experiences his or her own importance before they can appreciate others, and second, that such an understanding is needed before they can explore the world-of-the-other. Without this freedom, our children cannot express themselves in meaningful relations with the "world-of-the-other" (Suransky, 1992).

The purpose of this study was to examine how fairytales and storytelling can be used in play with young children to promote cultural understanding and peace education. Specifically, we were interested in understanding how fairytales from one culture can offer important learning opportunities to children growing up in another culture. This paper is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the rationale for using fairytales as a teaching medium with children. In the second section, we present findings from a study using fairytales from Kuwait with first grade children in the United States.

THE ROLE OF FAIRYTALES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

A considerable research literature addresses the importance of storytelling for children's development (Dwyer, 1988; Healy, 1991; Mikkelsen, 1990; Wason-Ellam, 1992). From the day children are born, many hear stories from their parents, grandparents, older siblings and a host of other family members. Such experiences are important for children's social, emotional and cognitive development. Listening to stories helps children develop listening and speaking

abilities and as well as nurturing creativity, imagination and thinking skills. Fairytales can be an especially important vehicle means of developing children's knowledge and skills in the classroom. As Flack (n.d.) notes:

> First, there exists an almost universal knowledge of fairy tales. Students do not have to engage in research in a new content area in order to participate in class activities. They are free to focus on the process skills to be learning. Further, most students are reasonably equal in their knowledge of fairy tales, thus no one student or group of students is particularly advantaged because of prior knowledge (n.d.).

Students are given the opportunity to be equal partners in the classroom regardless of their skill levels. This allows students the opportunity to learn in non-threatening environments. In addition, such intimacy with this type of text gives students the self-confidence needed to build language skills with a sense of security and authority (Sanacore, 1991).

A second reason for the use of fairy tales with children is that they provide a safe medium in which children can connect their play to a text. Fairytales are an especially rich genre for continuing to support children's development in these areas and, importantly, they do so in a way that can promote cultural understanding. Children feel freer to explore "wild ideas". Flack again draws our attention to this important idea, "Fairy tales are inventive by nature and fit nicely into the content-process matrix", and furthermore that "fairy tales provide a content base which is open to countless new, and additional, ideas and applications for creative teaching and learning (n.d, p. iv)." Fairytales promote cultural understanding because they address universal themes encountered by many cultures. By hearing fairytales children become a source for generating new meanings from the narratives they hear and in doing so develop new ways of understanding cultures.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING: THE TEACHER AS STORYTELLER

Storytelling in classrooms provides an excellent means of assisting children in connecting their own world with the "world-of-the-other". Storytelling, especially through the genre of fairy tales, strengthens language appreciation, creativity, and self-expression (Dwyer, 1988). In addition, when storytelling involves a teacher and classmates, children's stories become the central vehicle for their imagination, thinking, and learning (Dwyer, 1988; Wason-Ellam, 1992). Mikkelsen (1990) defines storytelling as literature:

> It is a circle. We make literature, and the literature we make helps to make us, helps us to puzzle out the ambiguities, the complexities of life. In creating we explore – and discover, literature causes us to know.

The teacher as storyteller and the children as audience share experiences which reflect what Briggs and Wagner (1977) call "elemental social process". This is clearly illustrated in the genre of fairy tales. We have noted above how oral

genres "build language competence in grammar, memory, attention, and visualization among many other abilities. Here we want to point out that, at least equally important, is the fairytales can be used to tap the richness of cultural traditions outside the mainstream and the talents of many children" (Healy, 1991, p. 290). These remembrances link the folk narrative with the art of storytelling. As a result, the past merges with the present, and both help us articulate a vision for the future. Through the living word, a connection and a new dialogue can be made between the narrator and the audience, between teacher, children and another culture. It is a process of creating a dialogical narrative (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1990). In addition, presenting the past in a dynamic way illustrates to children the consequences of historical events. Indeed history is "a long series of never ending stories" (Benedict,1992).

Folk narratives are a part of this long series, and by exploring it through the eyes of children, a better understandings of time and place can be reached. For instance, when a narrator relates a fairy tale, the story is told from the past, and, unlike books and television, the storyteller can respond to the expressions of the audience (Wilcox, 1990). The storyteller in this case not only tells a story but becomes the master of all the action within the story (Livo & Rietz, 1986). In short, "through collaborative storytelling new worlds can be created, old ones revisited and reviewed" (Hendy, 1992, p. 103). Thus, the role of the teacher as storyteller in the classroom is crucial.

The storyteller involves the audience in conversation. Questioning techniques and debate in the classroom are important; they encourage the students to listen and respect others' views. In such an environment, "children are free to develop and explore ideas unconstrained by curriculum requirements. Such activity requires a sophisticated degree of language: language that can be challenged, questioned and changed, arising from pupil interaction rather than teacher intervention" (Hendy, 1992, p. 108). When the teacher as storyteller uses stories, discussion and questioning strategies flow naturally, eliminating the need to focus on developing comprehension skills (Dwyer, 1988). Furthermore, children's stories when used in the classroom can be powerful tools for children to think, learn, creatively express themselves, and to provide a context for them to interact with each other (Wason-Ellam, 1992).

THE CHILD AS STORYTELLER

We also must ask "What happens when the child becomes the storyteller?" Some cultures put a great emphasis on storytelling. Indeed, they encourage their children when they are young to reach this position (Heath, 1983). The Arabic culture looks at the poet and the storyteller in the past as we look now at any news station. It is an important role still played in some communities in the Middle East.

Stories are a medium for children to learn language, therefore the child must be viewed as an original source for generating meaning from the narratives

from which he hears (Lehr, 1991). Pellowski (1977) argues that in order to generate new stories and narrate the old ones, the child needs to listen to this art. Therefore, the child imparts and uses the model that he heard from adults (Zobairi & Gulley,1989). The teller shares the source with the child and the child initiates new meaning according to his interpretation of the story. In this way the child enters into the dialogical narrative as author and audience (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1990).

Many middle class children are much more familiar with being read to directly from books. They are not accustomed to listening to a story using a folklore venue. In other words, they are not acclimated to the traditional art of stories being handed down through the generations using verbal recitation (Zipes, 1988, 1989). This is especially evident among white middle class children (Zipes, 1988, 1989). However, McAdoo (1991) notes that among African Americans such storytelling is common. Campbell (1991) documents that the same is true of Native Americans.

Healy (1990) notes that reading the story limits the imagination to primarily the visual clues provided in the illustrations. Although storytelling with young child often employs illustrations, many times when children just listen to stories, they learn to visualize without visual aids. Children are able to enlarge the tale to include and visualize their own interpretations. The "ability to visualize, and to fantasize, is the basis of creative imagination" (Baker & Greene, 1977). It enables children to develop empathy and insights into the motives and actions of others, and to respond to the sounds and the vivid pictures. This is an active process of feeling, reflecting, creating and seeing through the senses (Zobairi & Gulley, 1989).

Research has found differences between children seeing a televised folktale and those who only hear the same dialogue. Results show that those who watched a televised folktale described the exact events in the story without any intervention. In contrast, those who only heard the story read aloud gave more interpretations of the dialogue and information about the story (Healy, 1991). This experiment significantly demonstrated the importance of imagination. Imagination in this sense is what William Blake, the English poet, described as a vehicle that "creates reality" (Sloan, 1991, p. 13). Literature is born of imagination in which everything and anything is feasible (Hendy, 1992). So, when the narrator tells a story in the language of imagery, children pursues the events in the story that are connected with their everyday lives. This allows children to convey experiences of the past that the storyteller has just handed to them into a possible future. This can only be possible through metaphorical language (Bearne, 1992). Not surprisingly, Healy (1991) concluded that a lack of imagination may contribute to the deficient analytic skills, poor problem solving skills, and poor memory strategies in today's children.

Research also has shown that if children feel personally responsible for getting meaning out of what they are learning, their comprehension, memory, and thinking abilities become more effective and incisive (Healy, 1991).

Vygotsky (1978) suggested that it is within the zone of proximal development that adults teach children strategies for thinking. These strategies excite, enlighten, and ignite the mind and the imagination. Fox (1992) notes that it is the 'sparks' that occur within the relationship a child has with a book that is responsible for enkindling the 'fire of literacy'.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The goal of the study was to present two different versions of a fairytale to children to help them understand and appreciate other cultures through the art of storytelling. The purpose was to demonstrate to the children how different cultures have very similar tales and that similar stories can have different meanings. By exploring different versions and different meanings of a single tale, children can learn the importance of communicating through stories. The study took place in a rural elementary school in the midwestern part of the United States. All of the participating students were 7 to 8 years of age and were in the first or second grade. The first author visited the school and conducted the activities with the children.

METHODOLOGY

According to Glense and Peshkin (1992), three data gathering techniques are common in qualitative research: participant observation, interviewing, and document collection. This study used all three procedures. Such inquiry allows participants to express their thoughts about a single phenomenon, a single text, and about events in the exact manner that they experience them. In addition, through observation and participation, the researcher has the opportunity to examine children's interpretation in dialogic way. This dialogical discourse brings both teachers and students into partnership, so that they can learn from each other through dynamic interaction. Such interaction allow students voice to be heard (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Therefore, qualitative inquiry is needed in order to understand the complexity and vicissitudes of such issues.

THE STORYTELLING ACTIVITIES

Before I (the first author) introduced myself to the children, I put pictures illustrating ten versions of Cinderella on a table. The children examined the pictures after which I introduced myself as a person from Kuwait. The children were keen and curious to know more about my country. I then explained to the children how the pictures illustrated different versions of the tale by depicting the tale in different places and at different historical times. Billy, one of the students, was puzzled about numerous versions of the same tale. I explained that different cultures have very similar tales and that can we learn from the different tales. I also said that by understanding different versions of a tale we can address why are there misunderstandings in the world. He replied "You mean we can

use Cinderella as peace maker." I responded that this is exactly my goal for my whole study.

After this introduction, I narrated the story Oh My Mother The Fish (Wells & Al-Batini, 1987) which is the Kuwaiti version of Cinderella (see Appendix A). I chose the story of Cinderella because it is familiar to children in the United States and because many versions of it are told throughout the world. Indeed, Cox (1893) estimated that there were three hundred and forty five variations of this tale throughout the world. More recently, Huck (1993) estimated that 500 variants of this tale appear in Europe alone. This particular story also allowed me to study the children's responses on issues of gender and economic status. When I finished telling the story, I asked the children what differences and similarities they found between the story I just narrated and the story they knew. The children noted the following:

> The fish plays the role of the fairy godmother in the Kuwaiti version.
>
> The setting took place in Kuwait instead of Indiana.
>
> The heroine walked to the party instead of the pumpkin being transferred into a coach. There are no mice, cats or a dog in the Kuwaiti version.
>
> There is only one stepsister in the Kuwaiti version instead of two.
>
> In their version, Cinderella lost her shoe on the step. In the Kuwaiti version, she lost her shoe in the well.
>
> Cinderella went to a ball instead of a party.
>
> Cinderella's clothes disappeared, but in the Kuwaiti version, she kept them.

From their responses, I concluded that the children had a sense of the theme of the story. Lukens (1982) defines theme as "the idea that holds the story together, such as a comment about either society, human nature, or the human condition. It is the main idea or central meaning of a piece of writing" (p.101). The ideas the students came up with about the similarities and differences between the different versions from different cultures are an example of what Lukens defines as theme.

After the discussion, I asked the students to work in groups writing their own versions of Cinderella taking place in 1994. Billy, Patty, and Kathy wrote a version that had a little sea creature who gave Cinderella a dishwasher to wash the dishes. Then Cinderella asked the sea creature for a husband. In this version, she wants a husband "because (sic) she don't want to do any work and ... he can do it". Jimmy, Terry, Grant, and John, replaced the heroine with a hero. They illustrated the hero as an outstanding basketball figure, Michael Jordan, who has a stepbrother, Shaquille O'Neal. The two brothers are fighting over "a beautiful girl". Because Michael Jordan was shorter than Shaq, he had a Godfather, Bobby Knight, who taught Michael how to win. Jordan marries the beautiful girl and they lived happily ever after. His stepbrother breaks the goal because he lost

the game. So, he stays all night fixing the goal. Not surprisingly, the four boys replaced the main character, a woman, to a man. Bleakley and Hopkins (1988) have shown that gender can have a strong influence on the content and theme in children's writing.

The third group, Cathy, Angie, Katie, and Tina changed the name of the main character from Cinderella to Cassie. In this group's version, there is a modern fairy godmother who "turned a box into a buggy". Although Cassie had a good time at the ball, her stepmother was angry with her. She found one spot that was not clean and said Cassie could not leave the house for a year. The prince, on the other hand, was faithful to Cassie whom he met at the ball. He waits until one year and then marries Cassie and takes her to live with him in his castle. They have five children and lived happily ever after.

Based on my observations it appears that these first and second graders preferred to tell rather than write their stories. They were more comfortable as storytellers than as storywriters. They had many wonderful stories waiting to be told, but they had difficulty getting their thoughts down on paper as quickly as they create them. In consultation with their teacher, we decided to let the students dictate their stories to her (see also McKamey, 1991). This permitted the children to give free rein to their imaginations.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between the ordinary character of Cinderella and the children's representations of her give us a glimpse at both the children's creative powers and their understanding of the world. Children take up the role of the author, or better yet, the role of the all-powerful fairy godmother that made the pumpkin into a coach and turned mice into horses. In so doing, the children are not rehashing the story they just heard or the version they have always known, but creating a new version. By creating a new story, then, they become the real creator and author of the tale.

What we are suggesting in this study is that the use of fairytales enables children to explore other cultures through direct engagement with some of the underlying values, images and stories of the cultures. These children were able to see how fairytales from their own country were similar and different in important ways from the fairytales of another culture. Just as myths and fairytales embody the deep ways that cultures are expressed, the tales written by the children expressed the meanings they created in their study of the fairytales. Thus, children had the opportunity to use their own oral traditions to interpret and understand the oral traditions of another country. By connecting different versions of the same tale from different parts of the world, the tales become the starting point for a dialogue between nations and between the children in those nations. Similarly, we also can say that the experience exploring the meanings of fairytales from another country helped children better understand tales important in their own country. As we noted earlier, this is what we mean by a dialectical

narrative. In essence, this study is about the ways fairytales from several cultures can be used to engage children in a dialogic narrative in early childhood classrooms. We believe the use of fairy tales with young children deserves more attention not for what it can tell us about fairy tales, but what it can tell us about children.

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APPENDIX A.

"SMIMCHA"

(A Kuwaiti version of Cinderella)
Retold and Translated by Ali A. Al-Mar

In a little house on the seashore there once lived a goodhearted fisherman with his wife and their only daughter, Noura. The three of them lived a pleasant, comfortable life - that is, until the day when Noura's mother became very, very sick. She was so ill, in fact, that at last she went to be with God. When she died, the fisherman and his daughter grieved terribly over her, and cried bitter tears.

After this, the fisherman lived alone with his daughter Noura, who now took care of her father, prepared his food, washed his clothes and kept the house neat and tidy. But it made him feel very sad to see her working and tiring herself out all day long with so many responsibilities when she was still just a little girl. So, he decided to marry again and start a new family. For his new wife, he chose a neighbour woman of theirs who had lost her husband some years earlier. She also had a little girl who was in need of loving care and affection. Besides this, the neighbour woman had often shown Noura the utmost love and compassion – especially when Noura's father was nearby. And thus it was that the fisherman married the neighbour lady and brought her to live with them in their house.

After this, the fisherman began going out to work again with his mind at rest, thinking that his little girl Noura was in good hands. He could never have imagined how much she was suffering in his absence from the tyranny and cruelty of his new wife and her daughter. They would put Noura through terrible torment and make her do all their work for them as if she were their servant. All day long she had to be at their beck and call, meeting. their every demand. They also forced her to prepare various kinds of foods, clean the house, wash the dishes and do the laundry. Her father's wife was no longer kind to Noura even when her father was at home. Instead, she would accuse her of being lazy and of not helping her with the housework, so that her father would scold her and threaten her with dire punishment. And thus the years went by, until one day when God blessed Noura's father with a huge catch of fish. And among the other fish there was one which was especially big. Noura's stepmother shoved a basket of fish at her and told her to go clean it and get it ready for lunch. So Noura took the fish down to the seashore to clean it there. But when she took hold of the great big fish, it wiggled and squirmed and began speaking to her. "Let me go", it said to her, "and make you rich!"

Then the fish began begging Noura to throw her back into the water where her babies were. Noura's heart went out to her, so she picked up the mother fish and threw her back into the sea. When Noura did this, the fish started swimming and jumping around happily. Then

she came back to Noura and thanked her profusely. "May God bless you, my daughter", she said, "from now on, you can consider me your second mother. If you ever need anything, just come to the seashore and call, Oh mother Smimcha and you'll always find me at your service."

Then she dove down into the depths of the sea and brought Noura another big fish that looked just like her. This way, Noura's stepmother wouldn't be angry with her for losing the big fish her father had caught. Then Noura went back home, prepared the fish for lunch, and served it to her father, his wife and her wife's daughter. They ate till they were stuffed, and didn't leave Noura anything but a few leftovers that wouldn't put any meat on her bones, or even satisfy her hunger, for that matter. Noura picked up the dishes and pots and pans and went to wash them in the sea. And since she wanted to see whether the fish had been telling her the truth, she stood on the shore and started calling, "Oh mother Smimcha! Oh mother Smimcha!"

In the twinkling of an eye, the fish came out of the depths of the sea and asked Noura what she needed. Noura told the fish that she was about to die of hunger. When the fish heard this, she said some magic words, after which there appeared on the seashore a huge table laden with all sorts of delicious things to eat and drink. Then Noura ate until she was satisfied and drank until her thirst was quenched. Smimcha also used some magic words to wash the dishes for Noura. And thus it was that Noura began eating and taking her rest every day on the seashore, and she started to grow bigger and taller and more and more beautiful.

Then one day, the Sultan sent his soldiers to invite all the inhabitants of the city to a grand celebration which he was going to host in his palace. When people heard about the Sultan's party, they all started getting ready for the happy occasion. On the night of the celebration, Noura's stepmother mixed lentils and rice together on a tray, then told Noura to separate the lentils from the rice, and to make sure she finished the job before she and her daughter returned from the party. Then she and her daughter put on their fanciest clothes and jewelry, and off they went to the Sultan's palace. After they had left, Noura went out to the seashore and called on Smimcha When Smimcha appeared, Noura informed her that everyone in the whole city had gone to the Sultan's celebration. As for her, she was the only one who couldn't attend, because she didn't have a suitable dress, besides the fact that her stepmother had given her some chores to do at home. Still, she really would have loved to be able to go to the king's celebration. With sweet and comforting words the fish set Noura's mind at rest.

Then she spoke some magic words, and there appeared on Noura a beautiful dress, glittering jewels, and a pair of lustrous golden shoes. She told Noura that she could go to the party, but that she would have to come home before midnight, and before her stepmother returned. Smimcha also told Noura that she would separate the lentils from the rice for her while she was gone. At this, Noura thanked Smimcha profusely and went off happily to the celebration. When Noura arrived at the palace, she won everyone's admiration with her beauty, the elegance of her dress, her jewels and her lustrous golden shoes. She passed right in front of her stepmother and stepsister, and they didn't even recognize her. Her beauty and people's fascination with her caught the attentior of the Sultan's son, and because she had been enjoying herself so much at the party, Noura forgot all about the instructions Smimcha had given her. When she finally remembered, she threw a bone at her stepmother and

stepsister. As a result, they both started screaming, which caused people to gather all around them.

While this was going on, Noura rushed out of the palace without anyone noticing her. As she was running, one of her golden shoes fell off, but she didn't stop to pick it up. Instead, it was picked up by the Sultan's son, who tried to catch up with her, but without success. When Noura got back home, she took off her beautiful dress and hid her golden shoe, then put her old clothes on again. She found that Smimcha had done all the chores that her stepmother had assigned her. When her stepmother and stepsister got back, they began describing to Noura how marvelous the party had been, and the warm welcome they had received from the Sultan. They also told her about the princess who had left the party all of a sudden, about how the Sultan's son had gone running after her, and about the lustrous golden shoe that he had found on the ground after the princess ran away.

The next morning, the Sultan's son summoned his soldiers, gave them the golden shoe and asked them to search all over the country until they had found its owner. So they took the shoe and began going into the houses of everyone in the city, one by one. But they didn't come across the shoe's owner, until at last there was only one house left – he house of the fisherman. So they went and knocked on his door, and were greeted by Noura's stepmother. The soldiers asked her to try the shoe on all the young women who lived in the house, by order of the Sultan's son. She informed them that she and her husband had only one daughter. Then she went and hid Noura in the oven. She put the lid on it and spread grain over the top of it, then took her own daughter and presented her to the soldiers. They tried the shoe on her, but it didn't fit, since she had quite a big foot. So the soldiers picked up the shoe and began to leave the house. But they were followed by a beautiful rooster, who started crowing and saying to them, "Cock-a-doodle-doo, Cock-a-doodle-doo! My lady Noura sits in the oven instead with grain scattered over her heads." The soldiers were amazed by what the rooster was saying, but Noura's stepmother scolded the rooster and implored the soldiers to pay no attention to it. But the rooster began crowing again, saying, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo! My lady Noura sits in the oven instead with grain scattered over her heads."

So the soldiers went back into the house and took the lid off the oven. When they did so, they found lovely Noura sitting inside covered with ashes. So they took her out and tried the shoe on her, and it fitted. Then Noura went and fetched the other golden shoe, and the soldiers were delighted to have found its owner. So they rushed away to bring the happy tidings to the Sultan's son. When they got back to the palace, they told him about how they had found the owner of the golden shoes, and he compensated them royally. Then the Sultan's son went out to visit the fisherman and asked him for the hand of his daughter Noura in marriage. The fisherman was overjoyed, and announced his acceptance of the prince's proposal. Then the Sultan's son asked the fisherman what he would like for his daughter to receive as a bride price. But his wife butted in and asked the Sultan's son to send them a box of dates, a palmleaf basket full of dried fish, and a bunch of radishes as Noura's bride price. So the Sultan's son sent them what they had requested. On their wedding night, Noura's stepmother told her to eat the whole box of dates, the whole basketful of dried fish, and the entire bunch of radishes that the Sultan's son had sent as her bride price. She did this because she wanted Noura to reek so horribly that the Sultan's son would want to stay away from her.

Noura had no choice but to eat what her stepmother had served her, and afterwards she had a horrendous stomachache. So she rushed out to the seashore and called on *Smimcha.*

When *Smimcha* appeared, Noura told her about what her stepmother had done to her on her wedding night. So with magic words, *Smimcha* cleaned out Noura's stomach, and filled it instead with perfumes, pearls, precious stones and gold. She also adorned her with the most beautiful clothes and jewels. She filled Noura's room with a trousseau fit for a princess, and perfumed it with incense and rose water. In it she placed a huge bed covered with silk sheets and rose petals. Then she lit up the room with candles, laid a carpet and filled the room with various kinds of furniture and pillows.

When the Sultan's son arrived at the fisherman's house and went into Noura's room, he found it filled with the most delicate perfumes, and was amazed at the luxurious furniture that filled the room. He was delighted with his beautiful bride and with his new station in life. Meanwhile, Noura's stepmother was waiting for the Sultan's son to come fleeing out of the room in disgust once he had found how offensive Noura smelled. Instead, a whole week went by, after which the Sultan's son took his bride to live with him in his father's palace.

When Noura's stepsister was engaged to be married, her mother served her the same things she had served to Noura on her wedding night - dates, dried fish and radishes. After all, she wanted her daughter to have the same good fortune as Noura, out of whose stomach there had come pearls and sweet-smelling perfumes. But when her new husband went into her room and discovered how odious his wife smelled, he came fleeing out of their house and never came back!