

Reimagining Fairy Tales 2: Telling the Villain's Story

Many fairy tales have a villain who the reader is asked to accept as evil without explanation. For example; the Evil Queen in *Snow White* wants to kill Snow White because she is more beautiful than her, and the witch in *Hansel and Gretel* wants to lure and eat innocent children.



Hansel and Gretel, by Philipp Grot Johann, c1890

Telling the villain's story can be a fun way to create new stories from old ones, challenge the villain archetype¹ and help us think deeper about morality² by raising the question of whether there are really heroes and villains at all, or whether everyone has the capacity for good and evil and that it is the events of our lives that might lead us to make good or bad choices, and so be seen as a hero or a villain.

There have been some successful books, movies and shows in recent years that tell the villain's side of the story. For example; the movie *Maleficent* tells the story of the villain from *Sleeping Beauty*; the book and Broadway show *Wicked* tells the

story of the villain from *The Wizard of Oz*, and the *Disney Villains* series of books tell the stories of several Disney villains.

Telling the villain's story often involves imagining motives³ for villainous behaviour. For example, in the movie *Maleficent*, Maleficent's friend Stefan betrays her to become king, and his actions are so awful the viewer empathises⁴ with Maleficent and understands why she seeks revenge.

Try writing a story about a fairy tale villain. Create a backstory that helps you empathise⁴ with the villain and seeks to explain their villainous behaviour in the fairy tale.

Think of your own examples or use the table below for ideas. Don't be afraid to change or re-imagine the fairy-tale in other ways. Let your imagination run free!

Roll a dice to pick a fairy tale villain ...	
1.	Rumpelstiltskin
2.	The Sea Witch from the Little Mermaid
3.	The Evil Queen from Snow White
4.	The stepmother, or one of the stepsisters, from Cinderella
5.	The witch from Hansel and Gretel
6.	The enchantress from Rapunzel

¹ archetype: a typical example of a person or thing

² morality: the difference between right and wrong / good and bad

³ motive: a reason for doing something

⁴ empathise: understand and share the feelings of another