

Heritage Arabic eBook

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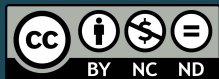
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Title: Tell Me a Story

Domain: This activity develops the students' ability to progressively create with and comprehend different forms of language including words, phrases, sentences, questions, connected sentences, and paragraphs that are appropriate to their performance level (novice, intermediate, advanced). Some examples include:

- Writing short social media posts and responding to the posts of their peers
- Giving a formal presentation on a matter that concerns their local community

Modes of communication: Interpretative, Presentational

Proficiency/Performance Range: Novice to Intermediate

Objectives:

- (1) Students will be able to use background knowledge of Arabic and American folk storytelling genres to produce their own stories.
- (2) Students will be able to identify different types of storytelling settings and formulas.

Note on language choice:

In this activity and many others, we have structured a certain amount of language choice and fluidity into the activity. During these stages, students may choose MSA, dialect, or even English for particular parts of the activity. While the extent to which students are permitted to use English is up to the instructor's discretion, we have marked certain steps of the activity as suitable to be conducted in a [mixed variety](#) of Arabic and English, which is more likely to reflect the actual linguistic practice of the heritage students and their communities. By barring English and/or some varieties of Arabic in the heritage classroom, instructors may be limiting students to particular varieties of language that don't reflect the linguistic practices used in their homes and communities. The heritage Arabic language classroom serves a number of pedagogical purposes, which certainly including goals of attaining proficiency in reading and writing in MSA. Equally important in the classroom is providing activities that can help students obtain the linguistic and socio-cultural skills required in order to communicate effectively *within their own communities* as emerging bilinguals. The classroom can serve to model a linguistic space where all language varieties are valued and hierarchies between varieties are made apparent.

Step One: IN CLASS

Discussion

1. In a large group, have students discuss in Arabic or English stories that they remember from their childhood. These stories may come from children's books, fairy tales, folktales, family stories, etc. Some questions that might guide the discussion include the following:
 - a) Did your family tell stories in Arabic?

- b) What kinds of stories were they?
 - c) Were there any differences between English-language stories and Arabic-language stories?
2. Write titles and/or topics of these stories on the board in either English or Arabic as the students are speaking. For all words or phrases written in Arabic, ask comprehension questions to ensure all students understand the meaning.
3. Have students work in small groups to brainstorm vocabulary that is commonly found in children's books and stories (characters such as the witch, the wizard, the troll, the boy, the girl, the mother, the father, the prince; places such as the forest, the castle, the desert; formulas such 'once upon a time' and '...they lived happily ever after'). If they come up with words or phrases in English, have them work with one another to translate as much as possible into Arabic. Once the groups are finished discussing and building their vocabulary list, have each group write their list on the board. As a class, review the lists and translate any words that are written in English into Arabic.

Reading

1. Put students into small groups of 3-4 and distribute a selection of children's books in Arabic to the groups. Alternatively, print out a selection of stories in Arabic that students can use in class (you may want to make these texts available electronically, or look for online sources). Ideally, the collection would include classics such as *Kalila and Dimna*, *1001 Nights*, as well as works written in colloquial Arabic (dialect) that have come out in recent years such as [*The Girl Who Lost Her Imagination*](#) and [*Where Shall I Hide?*](#) by Reem Makhoul and Stephen Farrell.
2. Have students read texts aloud in small groups. Assign different stories to different groups. Encourage students to use contextual cues, including pictures, if there are any, to help with comprehension. Have students make a list of new/unfamiliar vocabulary for discussion.
3. Have each group write a brief summary of the story which they will share with other groups. The length of this summary should depend on students' proficiency/performance level (i.e. for high novice and low intermediate students, this could be a series of words or sentences. For more advanced students, this could be paragraphs and include opinions). See this ACTFL [link](#) for more details on what your students should be able to do with regard to summarizing text at each proficiency level.
4. Have students form new groups so that each new group consists of students who have read different stories. Have students explain to each other what their story is about.
5. Prepare students to write their own story at home. Using [this ACTFL chart](#) (p. 18) as your guide, monitor and assess your students' current control over text types (i.e. what they can create and comprehend at the level of words, phrases, sentences, connected sentences, or paragraphs). Then, set a target text type to scaffold instruction just above their current ability. You can do this in a number of ways. For example, as a large group, you can model a text type that is one level above the students' performance. If students are able to list a series of words (but

not yet write sentences), help students write strings of sentences by scaffolding certain examples just beyond their current ability. For instance, you might write on the board typical sentences found in stories such as: “Once upon a time, there lived a...,” “the girl went to...” etc. Encourage students to use these sentences in their own writing. If the students are writing at the level of sentences, help students think about words that they can use to connect the various sentences to produce paragraphs.

6. Invite students to find images—either pictures they draw or find on the internet—to complement their stories and make their texts more accessible.
7. Inform students that they will need to print out their stories, along with any images they include, and bring them to class.

Step Two: AT HOME

1. Have each student write their own story using the archetypical characters, settings and formats that were discussed in class. The stories they read together and in-class scaffolded text types can serve as a model.
2. Have students print out their stories with pictures to bring to class.

Step Three: IN CLASS

1. Divide students into small groups where each student will present their stories to other group members.
2. Inform students that they will be peer editing each others’ work. Suggested guiding questions for them to keep in mind may include the following:
 - a) What is the plot of the story? Who are the important characters? Where and when is it set?
 - b) What interesting/challenging vocabulary and language structures does the author use? What suggestions can you make for the author about language use?
 - c) What other suggestions can you offer?
3. When the groups are finished sharing their stories, come together as a class and debrief about this experience. Suggested discussion questions:
 - a) What was it like writing our stories and reading each others’ work?
 - b) What new language structures (vocabulary, phrases, discourse markers, etc.) have we learned?
 - c) What do the stories we’ve written say about us as a class, about our family histories, and about our individual experiences as Arabic speakers and participants in Arabic cultural history?

Step Four: AT HOME

1. Have each student revise their composition using their classmates’ feedback and class discussion.

Step Five: IN CLASS

1. Collect students’ revised stories and inform them that they will receive instructor feedback in the next class.

Step Six: INSTRUCTOR REVIEW

1. Review students' work for linguistic errors, organization, cohesion, and other elements. Make written comments.
2. Bring students' stories to the next class.

Step Seven: IN CLASS

1. Hand out students' stories with your comments. Review any questions that groups or individual students have, creating opportunities to reinforce the language structures and writing conventions that have been discussed.
2. Have students use this new information to revise their stories in class.
3. Inform students that they will post their final versions to the class Facebook (or other) group to be shared with the rest of the class. Encourage students to be creative with the presentation of the stories as well as the content. For example, they can make their story into a short, animated video with voiceover and words onscreen on YouTube. Remind students that these stories can be published online as free resources for Arabic-speaking parents in the US.

Step Eight: AT HOME

1. Students complete a final draft of their stories.
2. When they are satisfied with the finished product, have the students post it to the class Facebook (or other) group.