



Stage 9

East of the Sun, West of the Moon

Part I

Storyteller Notes

This is one of my favourite traditional tales – mostly because it steals from the rest! There are echoes of Beauty and the Beast, Cupid and Psyche, Snow White and Rose Red, Rapunzel, and more. But when a narrative comprises so many disparate parts, how can you craft a telling for younger listeners without losing their interest in all the complexity?

As with many of the other videos in this series, finding a refrain is the key. In longer narratives, a refrain becomes a point of reference: after a few repetitions, the children feel they own a part of the story in their memory – yet another example of the ‘imaginative investment’ which gives storytelling its power to entrance (see *The King and His Wish* for more ways to give your children ownership over your telling). Here, the main refrain is a rhyming couplet set to a simple tune with actions, but your refrain need not be so scripted. Indeed, my description of the prince’s nightly visits to Astrid’s room are repetitive in their focus, though the language I use varies subtly each time – still, this could be called a refrain.

Interest is also held by crafting a character for the storyteller, similar to the cat in *Tom, Dad and Colin*. An unusual headwear can be enough for your children to see you as a different person – after all, their attention will mostly be focused around your head. Most crucial to the illusion, however, is a characterful phrase – in this case, “My father was a...” Small touches like this are especially useful when your class have spent over a term with you as their teacher: suddenly they must rediscover you, a factor which adds an engaging element of mystery to your telling.

Written by Chip Colquhoun

Chip is a professional storyteller and a reviewer of children’s literature. Chip visits schools and theatres all over the UK with his storytelling colleague, Amy Robinson. Find out more at www.snailtales.org