

LITTLE WITCH

PODCAST

A fairy tale for all ages



STUDY GUIDE

projet mû

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DEAR TEACHERS AND PARENTS,

This study guide has been prepared to enhance young people's listening experience before it even begins.

Podcasts, by virtue of their immersive nature and broad accessibility, are an idea means of transmitting richly rendered, documented and appealing content, articularly for young audiences thirsty for knowledge but perhaps less comfortable with the written word.

This document offers some avenues of reflection to optimize the listening experience in the classroom while also inviting students to play with sound and to explore the world of storytelling and fairy tale, all within a pedagogical-listening framework.

These fun activities can also be enjoyed at home by the whole family.

The team at Projet MŮ

CONTENT CREATION

projet mû

Founded in 2006 by Nini Bélanger, **Projet Mû** explores the terrain of contemporary theatre. Building her productions through cycles of creation means the stage director can deepen her own artistic practice while investigating themes of interest to the company.

The original French work, *Petite Sorcière*, was first produced for the stage in 2017, and its English translation, *Little Witch*, in 2018. It was the first work in the Transmission Cycle which dares to break the fourth wall and speak to children and teenagers directly.

Live performance to podcast

Adapting *Petite Sorcière / Little Witch* as a podcast was a natural next step, since the text lends itself so well to auditory fiction. On the one hand, the fact that the play is essentially a narration enables us to follow the action without visual aids. On the other, the fact that the main character is “a young girl who says little but listens very well” makes it possible for us to focus on the sound environment at several key moments throughout the story.

<https://projetmu.com/en/>

TECHNICAL PRODUCTION

La Puce à l'oreille

La puce à l'oreille is the only Quebec-based company, and one of the very few in the entire French-speaking world, dedicated to the creation, production and distribution of audio-narrative content for young audiences (podcasts, interactive audio, etc.). La puce à l'oreille is also committed to introducing young people, teachers, and professionals in media and publishing to the art of creating audio narratives for young audiences.

Rooted in the conviction that children who are exposed to quality content – running the gamut from absorbing and entertaining to profound and sweet – will grow up to be adults who are critical, curious and clear-thinking, La puce à l'oreille was immediately spellbound by the *Little Witch* project. With its partners in crime at Studios Bakery, it happily undertook the production of this podcast.

<https://lpalo.com/>

THE PODCAST

How do you live with a monster who wants to eat you? Follow Little Witch on her adventures into the heart of the deep, dark forest. This fanciful podcast recounts a contemporary fairy tale about resilience and courage that will make you shake with laughter and tremble with fear.



PART 1 - THE MAGICAL FLOWER

Length : 09:20

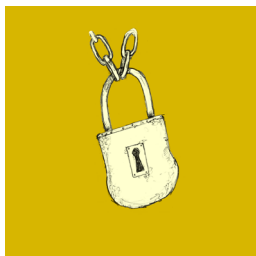
Gravely ill, Big Witch takes her daughter into the forest with the hope of finding a magic flower that can heal her.



PART 2- THE OGRE

Length : 11:00

On the brink of death, Big Witch seals a deal with the Ogre to take care of her daughter.



PART 3 - THE PRISONER

Length : 7:00

Little Witch discovers a child trapped in the pantry. To free the boy, she will have to make a deal with the Ogre.



PART 4 - THE SACRIFICE

Length : 9:01

Trapped, Little Witch must now choose who will be sacrificed... Will she be able to stay true to her mother's wisdom?

SOME KEYS

TO UNDERSTANDING FAIRY TALES

The fairy tale is a short story that injects the real world with a supernatural, fantastical or magical element. It is intended to entertain and to teach a life lesson. The fairy-tale hero or heroine undergoes a transformation as the story progresses, exactly like Little Witch does. Emerging from popular culture and the oral tradition, these stories were passed down from generation to generation. Then, starting in the Renaissance, fairy tales were written down and new works were penned by authors, some of whom, like **Charles Perrault** and the **Brothers Grimm**, remain hugely popular today.

MYTHICAL CHARACTERS

THE WITCH

The origin of the word “witch” is the Old English word *wicca*, but the persecution of witches goes back even further, all the way to ancient times. As was the case in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in various parts of Europe, most of those persecuted were women. Often practicing mid-wives and healers, very few were guilty of any actual crimes.

In fairy tales, wicked witches are often associated with animals such as black cats, crows, toads, spiders or rats: a rather unappealing menagerie. Witches were believed to have the power to transform themselves into animal form, to fly on broomsticks, to cast spells, to devour children and to sow evil on the eve of their sabbath.

These are just some of the fairy tales that feature a witch: *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White*, *Little Mermaid* and *Rapunzel*.



THE OGRE

From the Latin word “*orcus*” – which translates as “hell” – the ogre is the incarnation of nastiness, ugliness and cruelty. A fan of eating the fresh flesh of little children, he is the best-known of the fairy-tale cannibals. Despite his notorious greed, he possesses a fine palette and loves well-appointed little cherubs, raw or cooked. His vast height is explained by his insatiable appetite.

The ogre character, popularized by author Charles Perrault (who was the first to use the word), connotes the threat of a father’s authority. However, this same character is often tricked by his victims, because he is not very fleet of mind or of body.

These are just some of the fairy tales that feature an ogre: *Puss in Boots*, *Thumbelina* and *Sleeping Beauty*, in its less well-known variant featuring an ogress.

PODCAST CHARACTERS

Often, fairy-tale characters don't have first names, but are instead referred to by a nickname drawing on their appearance, identifying characteristic or occupation. Examples include Thumbelina, Puss in Boots or Little Red Riding Hood.



LITTLE WITCH

*Little Witch lives in the city
With her mother Big Witch
Big Witch is sick and has to lie down a lot*

*When her mother is too tired to stir
Little Witch takes care of her
Washing the dishes and tending the herbs*



THE BOY

*I live with Grandfather
In the village on the edge of the forest
Grandfather used to be a hunter
So he taught me how to find my way
hunt for food and hide it*



BIG WITCH

*People are idiots
I'm so glad to be a witch
For I see more than meets the eye
So I can see that my girl is truly beautiful*



THE OGRE

*The Ogre returns to his ogre life
Sleeping by day hunting by night
But when he gets home
The monster finds that the child's odour
Sweet and addictive*

SOME KEYS

TO APPRECIATING *LITTLE WITCH*



THE ORAL TRADITION AND THE FAIRY TALE

Storytellers are artists who tell audiences stories taken from personal experience. They don't read from a storybook or even learn the stories by heart, instead using improvisation to enhance the story, depending on audience reaction.

Storytelling as an art form has been around since the dawn of time. Serving as a kind of living memory, storytellers passed down the legacy of stories and traditions. In Western cultures prior to the Renaissance, this important role was filled by the Greek poet or rhapsodist, Celtic bard and Medieval troubadour. However, storytellers can be found the world over. In Africa, it is the griots who serve this function. The gousani of Armenia preserve their country's stories. In the past few years, this art form has once again become popular, and is considered to be quite distinct from that of a comedian or a writer, since storytellers address the audience directly as themselves rather than playing characters.

THE PODCAST: A NEW ORAL TRADITION

From a certain standpoint, the widespread popularity of the podcast format has revived orality's importance in our society, but in a manner that diverges quite a bit from traditional storytelling. As a matter of fact, in a podcast like *Little Witch*, every detail is carefully planned out so that the actress can perform all the characters in the story, and so that the sounds can be plotted out in advance to support certain dramatic events or suspenseful moments.

PODCAST SOUNDSCAPE

While creating the stage production, Nini Bélanger wanted to incorporate sound design into the show to support the actress' performance. In the podcast, the world of sound is obviously of prime importance, since the entire story relies on listening. Even though there are some concrete sounds (purring cat, bells ringing at midnight), most of the soundscapes are abstract. They transport young listeners to an imaginary place purely by virtue of their evocative power. This world of sound is what sets a podcast apart from the more traditional audio book, where the story is simply read out loud. In *Little Witch*, the soundscapes are as important as the text, as they augment key moments in the narrative.



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO GET THE STUDENTS READY PRIOR TO LISTENING

TO SEE IF STUDENTS ARE ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH FAIRY TALES...

Here are some questions on this subject to ask your students:

- ✕ What are your favourite fairy tales?
- ✕ Who are your favourite fairy-tale characters?
- ✕ Can you give an example of a fairy tale that scared you?
- ✕ Who are the scary characters in these fairy tales?
- ✕ When do you like to hear stories or to have stories told to you?
- ✕ What is a narrator?



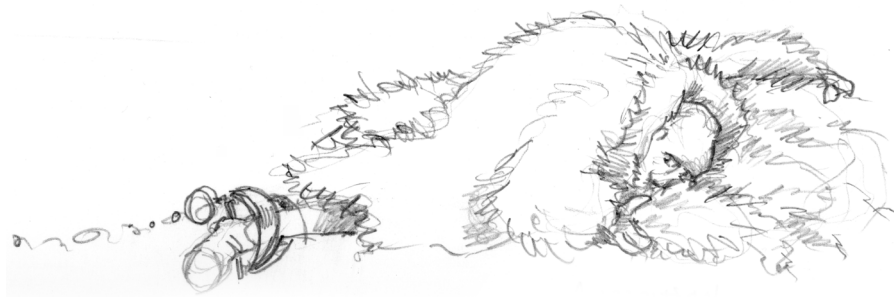
READ AN EXCERPT OF THE SCRIPT

After reading the following part of the story, ask your students to imagine what the ogre character looks like and then draw him:

*Big Witch discovers an ogre
Lying on a carpet of leaves
His foot caught in a trap*

*What do we have here?
Looks like a dying monster
This forest is just full of surprises*

*I know the hunter who did this
He was lucky to get away from me*





SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

SKILLS DEVELOPED BY LISTENING

Students will develop their media literacy skills by examining the hybrid nature of the narration, music and sound effects.

The audio experience offers or creates a number of learning opportunities for young listeners: enriching vocabulary; developing an interest in reading; improving oral, informational and technical skills; and so on. Moreover, actively listening to a podcast means being screen-free in all kinds of listening environments, on one's own or with others.

SOME IDEAS TO HELP CREATE A LISTENING-FRIENDLY EXPERIENCE...

- ✕ Bring your favourite thing to cuddle or hold
- ✕ Dim the lights
- ✕ Get comfy in a cosy spot
- ✕ Close your eyes so you can picture the characters in your mind

FOR ACTIVE LISTENING...

Invite the students to imagine the characters, settings and actions described, and to identify the feelings the story evoked.

Fill in the listening grid provided in the Appendix. Students can make note of these elements while listening, or afterwards. These grids help with intentional listening, and also serve as memory aids for the class discussion to follow.





SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO INVITE THE STUDENT RESPONSES AFTER LISTENING

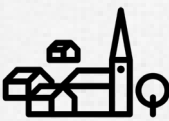
FOR LISTENING APPRECIATION...

Here are some questions you can ask to measure the students' appreciation levels:

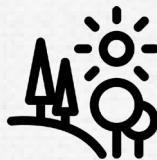
- ✕ What are some differences between Little Witch's life with her mother, Big Witch, and her life with the Ogre?
- ✕ At the end of the podcast, Little Witch chooses to go off on her own. What do you think happens to Little Witch after that?
- ✕ How many people do you think helped make this recording?

PLAYING WITH SOUNDS

When you click on an image, you will hear a sound effect or soundscape element used in the podcast. Ask students to identify what they are hearing and which part of the story corresponds to the sound.



Crédit icon :
Basti Steinhauer
(Noun Project)



Crédit icon :
Andrejs Kirma
(Noun Project)



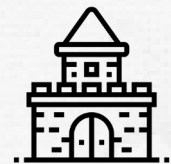
Crédit icon :
Andrejs Kirma
(Noun Project)



Crédit icon :
Llisoie
(Noun Project)



Crédit icon :
Mark Caron
(Noun Project)



Crédit icon :
Eucalyp
(Noun Project)

Ask students to make sounds to create different effects, just like the show's sound designer did. They can use their voice or a part of the body to make the sounds. To minimize the chaos, start off softly, then slowly increase the volume on the sound effects.

Some examples of soundscapes: the forest during the day, the forest at night, the city, raindrops, footsteps on autumn leaves...

WRITING EXERCISES

1st – 2nd – 3rd year: Ask students to write about a time in their lives that had a huge impact on them.

4th – 5th – 6th year: Ask students to make up their own fairy tale built around a story structure that draws on *Little Witch's* structure for inspiration.

LISTENING GRID (1ST – 2ND – 3RD YEAR)

The grid can be filled out while listening to the podcast or immediately afterwards.

Title of the podcast:

The characters:

Emotions you felt:

The places:

Sounds you heard:

LISTENING GRID (4TH – 5TH – 6TH YEAR)

The grid can be filled out while listening to the podcast or immediately afterwards.

Title of the podcast	
Initial situation	
Triggering event	
Plot	
Denouement	
Outcome	

TEACHER'S LISTENING GRID (1ST – 2ND – 3RD YEAR)

Title of the podcast: *Little Witch*

The characters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✕ Big Witch ✕ Little Witch ✕ The Boy ✕ The Ogre ✕ The narrator 	Emotions you felt:
The places: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✕ the shack ✕ the forest ✕ the village ✕ the Ogre's palace 	Sounds you heard: examples : cat, bells, music of the night, of the day, of the forest, etc.

TEACHER'S LISTENING GRID (4TH – 5TH – 6TH YEAR)

Title of the podcast	Little Witch
Initial situation	Little Witch and her mother live together in the city.
Triggering event	Gravely ill, Big Witch takes her daughter into the forest with the hope of finding a magic flower that can heal her.
Plot	They find a shack. Big Witch looks for the magical flower. Little Witch meets the Boy. Big Witch and Little Witch look for the flower together. Big Witch encounters the Ogre and seals a deal with him. Big Witch passes away. Little Witch goes live with the Ogre. Little Witch discovers a child trapped in the pantry.
Denouement	Little Witch kills the Ogre by making him eat the cat (to which he is allergic).
Outcome	Little Witch declines the Boy's offer and goes on with her life.

THE TEAM

PODCAST

TEXT AND ADAPTATION Pascal Brullemans
TRANSLATION Alexis Diamond
PRODUCED BY Projet MÛ
DIRECTED BY La puce à l'oreille and les studios Bakery
VOICE Emmanuelle Lussier-Martinez
MUSIC lefutur

STUDY GUIDE

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