

Once Upon a Time in the Classroom

by Michelle Nephew, PhD

Named to *GAMES Magazine's* "Best Family Card Game" list in 1997, *Once Upon a Time* is a storytelling card game that can also be used as an effective instructional tool in the classroom.

Players create a story together using cards that show typical elements from fairy tales. The Storyteller creates a story using the elements on her cards, guiding the plot toward her own ending, which is different than the endings of the other players. The other players use their cards to interrupt her and become the new Storyteller. The winner is the first player to use all her cards and bring the story to a close using her unique ending card.

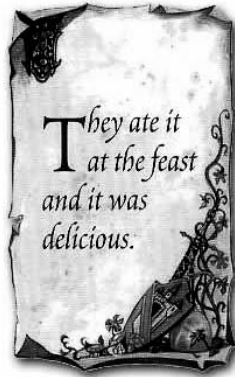
Once Upon a Time is a game for all ages — and is especially rewarding for younger children for whom the game provides an opportunity to exercise essential skills in reading, decision making, cooperative play, and creativity. It also presents a unique opportunity for use in classes teaching English as a second language (ESL) and foreign languages.

Basic Reading: The element cards in *Once Upon a Time* each feature a simple word and an image illustrating that word. Children just learning to read are visually encouraged to associate the two to find the meaning for themselves.

Decision Making: Choosing where to take the story and which cards to use to get there relies on fundamental planning and decision-making skills, as well as stressing the importance of sequential cause and effect in narrative forms. Players must keep track of where the other players are taking the story and assess the changing possibilities for using their own cards throughout the game.

Cooperative Play: Players must work together to tell a cooperative story, incorporating the ideas of other players into their

own. The object of the game is not so much to win, but to create a compelling story together. In this way, social activity is an important part of game play.



Creativity: In addition to exercising the imaginations of the players as they create the story, *Once Upon a Time* also offers a supplementary pack of blank cards — cards that are printed with the background but without text and a central illustration — so that players can draw their own story elements and make up their own endings.

ESL & Foreign-Language Classes:

When used as a classroom tool, *Once Upon a Time* encourages those for whom English is a second language to improve their reading and comprehension of common terms. It also requires interaction between players, forcing students to speak in English to tell their story while presenting that practice in an enjoyable format. The same can be said for foreign language classes that use the French, Italian, German, or Spanish translations of *Once Upon a Time*.

Once Upon a Time can be used to strengthen a variety of fundamental skills. And, best of all, it teaches those skills in a way that players find fun and familiar.

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Once Upon a Time, 2nd Edition

Stock #: AG1001 • ISBN: 1-887801-00-6 • MSRP: \$20.95 (US)

Once Upon a Time: Dark Tales expansion

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Once Upon a Time: Create Your Own Storytelling Cards

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