

Aportación de materiales coeducativos de Inglés por Micaela Ford, para las publicaciones de la I Semana Cultural Feminista "Mujeres que transforman el mundo"

To celebrate March 8, International Women's Day (2020)

'The Tale of the Voice,' by Emma Donoghue. A feminist retelling of a traditional patriarchal story based on stories in the oral tradition

Included in the story collection Kissing the Witch. Old Tales in New Skins

Audio & EFL Worksheet by MF at The Talking People Podcast

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About the author



Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1969, Emma Donoghue lives in Canada with her family. Among her published work, she has contemporary and historical novels, illustrated stories for young readers, literary history and anthologies, and short story collections like *Kissing the Witch*.



Donoghue in our EFL classroom. In the C1.2 groups I work with (advanced EFL learning, non-compulsory public education in Spain, adults so far), one of the Reading-Listening projects for the learning year is the novel *Room*

along with the TV series *Unbelievable*. In regards to bringing up the sensitive question of rape in class, one of the main topics in these works, there are probably few materials as good as *Room* and *Unbelievable* for a number of very good reasons. Simply allow me to say that our reluctance to address issues that hurt us so badly, directly or as a community, does not help us in any way, particularly because there *are* ways of addressing them that *do* help us change the world, by building a kind of society that does not encourage them, or justify them, or use them for domination. The key to constructive community thinking and discussion processes is finding a relevant or lucid or nonviolent approach to address issues of violence, and that generally comes with listening to the people we never listen to, or even trust, "women" being one of the largest and most complex and varied groups. Rape constitutes a key resource for the domination of other human beings, through terror to this kind of very demeaning violence and what may come along with it: the imposition of a pregnancy, and whether motherhood or abortion, for the case of women who can get pregnant. We need to understand how culture shapes our identity, but also how we, through our identity and being in the world, perpetuate culture or help transform it for a better evolution.

Donoghue's **feminist viewpoint**, analysis and sensitivity widens, surprises and empowers readers, allowing us to develop our critical understanding of the world, but also pointing at ways-out, ways of being there in a more lucid and culturally non-compliant way, which means, unreachable to its prevailing mandate of violence and helplessness. Learners are generally grateful for the meaningful conversations we engage in.

The Story

Kissing the Witch, published in 1999, is a sequence of thirteen re-imagined fairytales, inspired by traditional European sources. It was published for adults in the UK and for young adults in the US, and the author adapted it into a play that premiered in 2000. "The Tale of the Voice" is the 12th tale in the collection of stories called Kissing the Witch. Old Tales in New Skins. It is based on Andersen's Little Mermaid.

On her website, Emma Donoghue lists all the stories she wrote along with the name of the traditional story it was based on, and comments: *Kissing the Witch* is the easiest book I've ever written – a delight from start to finish – which I can only attribute to the fact that I took all its storylines from the ultimate plot-mistress, the Oral Tradition. . . . My method was mostly metaphorical: what if Thumbelina wasn't actually small, she just felt small? . . .

'The Tale of the Shoe' is based on the Grimms' folk tale of Cinderella.

'The Tale of the Bird' is based on Hans Andersen's Thumbelina.

'The Tale of the Rose' is based on Madame le Prince de Beaumont's Beauty and the Beast.

'The Tale of the Apple' is based on the Grimms' folk tale of Snow White.

'The Tale of the Handkerchief' is based on the Grimms' folk tale of the Goose Girl.

'The Tale of the Hair' is based on the Grimms' folk tale of Rapunzel.

'The Tale of the Brother' is based on Hans Andersen's Snow Queen.

'The Tale of the Spinster' is based on the Grimms' folk tale of Rumpelstilskin and similar stories of magical helpers.

'The Tale of the Cottage' is based on the Grimms' folk tale of Hansel and Gretel.

'The Tale of the Skin' is based on the Grimms' folk tale of Donkeyskin.

'The Tale of the Needle' is based on Perrault's Sleeping Beauty.

'The Tale of the Voice' is based on Hans Andersen's Little Mermaid.

'The Tale of the Kiss' is not based on any source text, but suggested by various folk motifs about oracles and magic helpers, discussed in Marina Warner's *From the Beast to the Blonde*.

About feminist retellings of patriarchal stories

The feminist retelling of traditional patriarchal written stories is a humanizing sociopolitical statement, not only interesting and/or enjoyable literary work. As literary work, we do learn about ourselves and others. As a critique to culture, feminist retellings help us think creatively and critically, by rescuing something human that is demonized, distorted or made invisible in our culture. We also restore information about what history as written by those in power has tried to erase: the diversity of viewpoints, interpretations and versions of a same subject matter or motive, for instance, very typically in the oral tradition -- where a same story was told in as many different ways as the minds of the different storytellers allowed. A diversity that reminds us of true facts about human beings, who are certainly influenced by their society and culture much more than they think, but who are also individuals who can think and feel beyond what culture dictates, and who can find ways of conveying different meanings using the same words, for instance, thanks to their experience, feelings, thoughts, creativity and imagination!

Now **listen** to the story!

General Task for this pack of Notes & Activities: Complete and/or adapt the following notes to suit your learning needs.

Learning to Listen & Understand Spoken English

• Listen to the story several times, and try to take it down as a dictation. When you find a word you can't understand, write how it sounds in that gap (regular phonemic transcription or



churrita!), so you can think about what it could be considering the context, or work out its spelling from its sound.

• Use the listening exercise of listening to the story as many times as you can to take notes for an outline that helps you learn to tell the story!

Speaking. Reviewing Pronunciation

For technical reasons, my transcription here is based on approximate Spanish sounds (*churrita* transcription). Please, check with a dictionary!

Tricky words

- weary /wiri/, wearily /wirili/ but comparative forms in /e/: /wérier/ /wériest/
- breath (n.) /brez/, §49 while I was still taking a breath
- breath (v.) /bríz/
- caulked /kókt/, like walk, talk, walker > no /l/; au /o/, as in restaurant, Australia, audio
- wiped /waipt/, wipes /waips/ we use to clean our hands or surfaces. Cf. whipped /wipt/ (whipped cream)
 - gull /gal/, a bird, cf girl /gerl/
- to wind /waind/ wound /waund/ wound /waund/ Examples: §62 I wound wild roses in my hair. Also: to wind a clock (we don't do it anymore). Don't wind me up! The winding road/staircase.

Dental endings

- **No problem**: thought, first, could /kud/, market, stood, side, merchant, lead /led/ = plomo
- Consolidating fluent & accurate pronunciation:
 wished and /wishtn/ (and like in rock-n-roll, black-n-white)
 wished I /wishtai/, ripped out /riptaut/, stared at /stértat/, learned every /lern dévri/tévri/
 /tt/: refused two /refiúst tu/, stopped trying /stopt train/, when it happened to me
 /güenít hápnd túmi/ (faster) /hápnttumi/

I'd learn /aid-lern/ glanced my way /glánsd/ (voiced s) /glánst/ (voiceless s, making sure you pronounce a dental!) scored red /scórd-red/ faster, possible /scórtred/ looked like /lukt-laik/ touched the ground /tacht-ðgraund/ caulked with mud /kookt-wiðmád/

More on dentals: Can you HEAR the 'd? Use the audio till you can! What's that "d" in: I'd already ripped out my first gray hair. Would? No!! Had! How do I know? Because the verb part of its verbal phrase is a past participle (ripped), not an infinitive (rip/to rip)!

Sibilant endings: in Andalucian Spanish, it is rare to pronounce the -s ending, like in other varieties of Spanish, and the *ch* is often pronounced *sh*, but it's OK because words can be understood anyway. However, in English this is not the case: words change their meaning to non-existent or incorrect form if you don't pronounce the ending -s.

Sibilant endings are: s (voiceless and voiced), x /ks/ or /gs/, the sounds sh (wash) and ch (watch), and dz (as in change or gym/Jim). Practice: excuses /igskiúsis/ / ikskiúsis/, neighbors' sons /néibersons/, father's, hours, across, backs, eyes, as, hands, scales, boots, toes, was, feathers, wisps, arms, fingers, Sundays, times, choose, fish, teach /iz/ Remember if we add an -(e)s to an ending in a sibilant SOUND, we need to separate those sibilants with an /i/ sound: box, boxes /bóxis/; he realizes /ríalaisis/; bush, bushes /búshis/; munch, she munches and munches! /mánchis/; it changes all the time /chéindzis/

Minimal pairs: v-b: voice/boys

Homophones: tale/tail

Cf. Writing: Homographs: lead: lead (v) /liid/ > (n) /liidr/ vs. lead (n) /led/ = plomo

Learning to Write & Reviewing Grammar

Based on the 6 first paragraphs of the story. Plus a list of other language items I found interesting for C1 students

Stories in the past. When you tell a story in the past, you need to use **different tenses** in the past to <u>make your language range rich!</u> Everybody uses the Past Simple easily, but can you also include a Past Continuous here, a Past Perfect there, a few Modals in the past, and even some Future-in-the-past? In oral exercises we can even introduce present tenses at dramatic moments in our narration (funny or intense) for drawing the audience to the scene! And, yes, of course, if you include dialogue, then we have the world of presents, too!

Task 1: <u>Underline</u> *personal* verbal phrases in this excerpt. You can use boxes for *non-personal* forms of verbs. **Key** at the end of this worksheet (select the space and change the ink to black).

Task 2: Put together your own version of a traditional story! (written, or oral with an outline)

Task 3: As you proofread your work, <u>underline</u> the personal verbal phrases so you can check how many tenses and modals you managed to use. Remember verbal phrases can also be in the passive voice! Not that this voice is common in stories (as compared to the language in the news, for instance), but you might manage to find a good place to use one!

The Tale of the Voice, by Emma Donoghue

§1 In the days when wishing was having, I got what I wished and then I wished I hadn't.

§2 I'll make no excuses; I was a grown woman when it happened to me. I'd already ripped out my first gray hair, and refused two neighbors' sons who thought they could have me for the asking. I'd learned every song my mother could teach me.

§3 I was standing in the market the day I saw him. I stopped trying to sell my father's bagful of fish. I stared at the stranger for hours, across baskets of salmon and the shifting backs of cattle, but he never glanced my way. He stood at the side of his merchant father like an angel come down to earth. All the neighbors saw me watching, but what did that matter now?

§4 His eyes were black like ink; mine blue as the sea. His hands were pale, gripping purse and quill; mine were scored red with fish scales. His boots looked like they never touched the ground; my toes were caulked with mud. He was as strange to me as satin to sackcloth, feathers to lead, a heron to a herring.

§5 Up to that day I must have been happy. Happy enough, at least, never to wonder whether I was or not. My sisters didn't use such language as we gossiped over our gutting knives and wiped wisps of brown hair out of our eyes with the backs of our hands. My mother, when she took a heavy basket from my arms, never searched my face. My father's eyes were cloudy as he flexed his fingers by the fire. Smiling was for Sundays.

§6 The morning after I saw* this man in the marketplace I woke up sick to my stomach and decided I was in love. If I didn't choose him, who was ten times better than any I'd ever set eyes on, I'd never choose. If this wasn't love, then it would never happen.



Textual Matters: Structure & Language

Opening line: §1 In the days when **wishing** was having, I got what I wished and then I wished I hadn't.

Topic sentence, too, and the topic is: wishing. The "problem" is a warning.

Comment: What a great opening! It's so musical!! And intriguing!

Creative Writing Task: Can you think of opening lines you'd like to read when opening a book?! **Rewording** the opening line in the story: in the days when you wished something, you had it, I got what I wished and then I wished I hadn't made that wish!

Topic sentences & Transitions:

Topic sentences establish the main topic in the paragraph, and they tend to be the first and/or the second sentence in the paragraph. Transitions allow the narrative to move on and the reader to be able to follow without getting lost -- that is why they are crucial for comprehension. Transitions can be connectors or phrases usually announcing changes in time and place, oftentimes!

§2 **Topic** sentence: I'll make **no excuses**; I was a **grown woman** when it **happened** to me.

Topic words: no excuses, grown woman, happened > Topic: Announcing something important happened, which might not have happened if she didn't allow it to happen! The paragraph is about showing she was a grown woman, but because it's literature it offers much more information.

Transition: I was a grown woman **when** . . . (see next sentence)

§3 Topic sentence: I was standing in the market the day I saw him

Topic words: market, saw him. Place: market. Topic: meeting him

Transition in the topic sentence: we move to a market the day of the event

Language: Adverbial relative clauses: the day when I saw him

Similarly, the day it happened > the day when it happened

Compare further on: The morning after I saw this man

Transition towards the end: *All the neighbors saw me watching* announces the topic in the next paragraph: what she sees.

§4 **Topic** sentence: *His eyes* were black like ink; *mine* blue as the sea (description)

Topic words: possessives contrasting "he" and "I", eyes, and the rest of the paragraph is like that, a description of two people presented as radically different.

Transitions: we move to focusing on the protagonists from her viewpoint (narrator's, too).

§5 **Topic** sentence: **Up to that day** I must have been **happy**.

Topic words: *up to that day, happy* (deduction)

Transitions: Up to that day (time), and then a deduction about that past of hers.

Language: Perfect modals (I must have been), a C1 item you need to master! Start your UL list and read them out loud! Prepositional phrases: up to (a physical way of indicating extension, length, including timelines!)

Closing lines:

Of paragraphs / They could be transitions instead:

Of the story:

More on Learning to Write

Language for Descriptions. *Do* work on this, people, modifiers, modifying clauses, prepositional phrases, and comparing and contrasting!

Task. Read the beginning of the tale and notice how what people do and say is intertwined with their description. If you want to learn to write, you need to learn to read: **noticing** things is key. Here is an example of what I notice:

- Describing by comparing: <u>like</u> an angel come down to earth; §51 (Pain) <u>Like</u> a sword cutting you in half §55 I stood <u>like</u> a stone §61 My throat was sealed <u>tight as</u> a drum §62 I was <u>white as</u> the wind §68 [Silent women] walked <u>like</u> letters on a page §68 happiness stretched <u>like</u> a scarf around my shoulders §63 My feet were <u>like</u> raw meat §65 I burned as if I were being split in two
- Describing through items: §8 Grace was in his smooth <u>boots</u>, and sunlight ran along behind him. His collar gleamed like a halo; ...
- Describing through the effect on the narrator: §8 This man was everything <u>I wasn't</u>, hadn't, couldn't ... he made me think of trumpets and horses and the flash of high gates.
- Read §4 and notice how she describes the two people by using different ways of comparing and contrasting: His eyes... mine / His hands... mine / His boots... my toes!/ satin-sackcloth...
- Notice the witch's descriptions: §12 Her white <u>hair</u> had a trace of red like old blood on sheep's wool. Her <u>nails</u> curled like roots. [§13 And yet she surprised me. Is he worth it?, she asked.] §12 Her <u>voice</u> had the <u>crackle</u> of old nets §32 The witch made a short <u>bark</u> I could only think was a laugh

Images & Language Word Choices: Literature & Expressivity

Task: Functional translation, or act it out!

§2 I'd already ripped out my first gray hair, and refused two neighbors' sons who thought they could have me for the asking

§3 I was standing in the market the day I saw him

§62 When I stepped out...

§3 He stood at the side of his merchant father

§3 (non-literal) I stared at him for hours across the busy market but he didn't even glance my way

§5 [we] wiped wisps of brown hair out of our eyes with the backs of our hands

§9 What would draw his lips down to my salty skin?

§2 I'd already ripped out my first gray hair. Why doesn't the author say "pulled out"?

My feeling: *Ripped out* is comical because you can see she is desperate or angry in the face of... a hair! It's also wild! An exaggeration.

§4 my toes were <u>caulked</u> with mud: the idea of "caulk" is that mud <u>prevents her from moving</u>, so a synonym not included in dictionaries but good for this context would be 'heavy'.

Compare to *caked with mud*, where the emphasis is on the fact the feet are covered in a thick dry layer. *Covered in mud* would be about flesh not being visible because the mud would hide it like a sock.

§54 Metaphoric events: She looked around her for a <u>thistle</u>, came close to me and <u>combed my</u> hair with it. Then she turned to go into the cave.

§8 Personification: sunlight ran along behind him (like an exciting child)

§9 Objectification/Reification: Women would bloom at the sight of him

§10 Lexical Creativity: and magicked him into a gull

§4 Tenses. **Emma Donoghue** wrote to me this, about not using the present perfect:

In the case of "never touched" I went for past simple instead of past perfect to suggest that the boots' floatingness was a permanent quality rather than simply a matter of experience to date.

Semantic fields: *SEE* & LIGHT. *I stared at the witch* (in amazement, censoring her). Cf. I glared at her (I was so angry!), I glanced at her (had a look)...

§3 to stare at somebody: I stared at the stranger for hours.



§32 I stared at her fingers

§3 to glance somebody's way: he never glanced my way = he never looked in my direction, to

where I was standing/sitting. (Come) this way = Follow me

And the noun: §10 a glance: a single glance of her watery eye

§3 to see somebody watching sb/sth: All the neighbors saw me watching

§4 to look like (subject) never ...: His boots looked like they never touched the ground

§5 to search sb's face: My mother ... never searched my face

§6 to set one's eyes on sb/sth: (the best painting) I'd ever set my eyes on

§8 sunlight, to gleam like a halo, the flash of metal gates

Useful Language (Repeat & Repeat):

§31 I haven't spoken to him yet, I said in a rush

§33 This must be the real thing!

§35 What's stopping you?

§37 What's wrong with you that you would make yourself over again?

§39 Change for your own sake, if you must, not for what you imagine another will ask of you.

§44 It felt like (a victory)

§45 She ignored that

§49 while I was taking a breath

§54 I have a weakness for brave fools (A good line for making people laugh at times, right?)

§55 She looked over her shoulder

§59 She touched me lightly on ...

§62 She had done what she promised

§61 feelings: one of my sisters turned angry, one mocked me, another wept

§64 I was a puzzle to him

Developing Language Awareness

World Englishes

What variety of English is the author using? Collect words pointing to one or various possibilities.

> See key at the end of these notes, with an explanation by Emma Donoghue herself!

neighbor (neighbour), learned (learnt, though learned is possible), past simple instead of past
perfect (His boots looked like they had never touched the ground), burned (I burned as if)...

Register & language in fair tales!

§1 *I got - I received*: "I got" is informal and semiformal at times, depending on context. "I received" would sound here too formal for the voice of the main character, the "I" narrator. Consider that tales are told with ordinary language and sprinkled with special words to give it the status of special narrative.

Tales are not told in the first person! But this one is. Why do you think is that? What effect does that have? What does it do to the story? A clue might be that the magic in this story is fairly absent... Or is it?

If you create an outline with key words or pictures of the moments in the story, do you think the content structure resembles that of traditional tales or not? Why is that so?

Understanding Language Functions

What's "will" here: "I'll make no excuses"? A future? Not exactly! It's announcing a promise! That's the language function of "will" in this sentence. Of course, promises relate to the future!

Ability in the future & (morphosyntax) **or/neither/nor**:

§47 You won't be able to laugh or answer a question, to shout when something spills on you or cry out with delight at the full moon. You will neither be able to speak your love nor sing it with that famous voice of yours.

Intensity: with words, with structures, with order... Expressing stronger feelings

Exclamations, so + n/adj, derogatory words, ironic comments, fronting

§62 what need had I of words?

§64 how the words were sweet to my ear (The words were so sweet to my ear!)

§71 You will laugh to hear how shocked I was (How shocked was I! / I was SO shocked!)

§73 How should I blame him? How was he to know what mattered to me?

§76 What a fish out of water I was now, gulping on the cold streets as if every breath would be my last.

§9 Even if I went there, what could I say, what could I do?

§11 with a noun. They said so many things about her, they couldn't all be true;

§66 with an adjective. He was so sorry

§73 His <u>sweet dumb little foundling</u> asked <u>so little of him</u>, and that little <u>was so easy for</u> the flesh to give, why should she get anything more?

§77 Always I would be restless now. Always I would know what I was missing.

Other So types (morphosyntax)

§10 So I went to the witch (consequence, result)

§29 I think so (horrid literal translation: I think that yes)

Vocabulary

Look-Seem

§4 His boots looked like they never touched the ground

§7 My throat seemed stopped up with the thought of him

worth

§13 Is he worth it?

§21 Whoever he is, he's not worth what you'll pay

§23 He's not worth it

Morphosyntax

Wordformation

Quantifiers: §3 a bagful of fish, §76 a mouthful of food

Similarly, a truckload of food ("The Debutante," by Leonora Carrington:

http://www.talkingpeople.net/tppodcast/2009/10/17/stories-the-debutante-by-leonora-carrington/)

Special uses of pronouns: §19 There's always a *him*.

-ing nouns: Smiling was for Sundays

Will you ever use it, dear students? Actions as subjects? (or objects, too)



Learning to use <u>adverbs</u> of manner <u>& -ing phrases</u> to describe verbs!: adverbs are to verbs what adjectives are to nouns, to put it metaphorically! They give you additional information about how the verb was performed!

§27 I told her coldly. In a cold way/manner

§15 she said dismissively

§18 I studied her suspiciously

§16 I said, steadying my breath. How did I say it? Trying to breath normally

§36 Instead of "angrily" she says "stamping my foot on the turf" (images: not "ground", "turf")

Participle clauses (-ing, or past participle) - key for varied sentence structure in your Reviews §61 I set off from our cottage, <u>heading</u> into the mountains. Also: <u>Heading</u> into the mountains, I set off from our cottage

§64 Clothed in his gaze, I could not be put to shame

Using instead

§62 Whenever I would have liked to sing I counted sheep instead

§71 Instead I must admit that I crouched there, watching, for the little eternity it took

Perfect modals

§4 Up to that day I must have been happy (deduction)

§72 My legs around his waist must have been as warm as ever.

Conditional Sentences

§6 If this <u>wasn't</u> love, then it <u>would</u> never happen (Type 2: Hypothetical, If + past simple, + would) §8 If I <u>couldn't</u> have him, I'<u>d have</u> nothing (Mixed, If + "could" similar to was not allowed/able to have him, perfect conditional = would have)

§74 If I <u>drank</u> from his throat, <u>might</u> it give me back my voice? (mixed) (Type 2: would it give me back?)

Hypothetical situations

§9 nothing bad could happen to a man like that; the city would be a garden at his feet. Women would bloom at the sight of him. Even if I went there, what could I say, what could I do? What would draw his lips down to y salty skin?

§21 Tell me now, what **would** you do for him?

§22 (And Type 2 conditionals, of course) *If* he <u>was</u> drowning, I said slowly, I suppose I'<u>d jump</u> in the sea to save him. I'<u>d forget</u> father and mother and sisters for his sake. I'd ... I'<u>d weave</u> nettles with my bare hands.

Indirect Questions & Exclamations

§61 and (she) asked what I was doing

§67 After a while I would have liked to ask when we were going to be married

§71 You will laugh to hear how shocked I was (How shocked was I! / I was SO shocked!)

§76 What a fish out of water I was now, gulping on the cold streets as if every breath would be my last.

Passive infinitive:

§20 He's not a fish to be caught

As Clauses

§5 My sisters didn't use such language as we gossiped (while - time)

§5 My father's eyes were cloudy as he flexed his fingers by the fire (while - time)

§10 So I went to the witch, as desperate girls do (like - comparison)

By the time

§62 By the time I reached the city I had no more fear.

Sentence Structures

Questions

§13 Is he worth it?

§14 Worth what? The climb?

§15 What climb?

§25 Am I right?

Negative sentences

§23 Not particularly useful in this case

§73 Perhaps we get, not what we deserve, but what we demand.

No matter

§25 No matter how greedy he may be you'll think everything belongs to him by right

§25 No matter how stupid he is you'll think he converses like an angel

Possessive Adjective/Object Pronoun + -ing (+ Object)

§23 (there's) No point (in) my (/me) telling you he's not worth it, I suppose.

Verbs of the senses + -ing/bare infinitive:

§3 All neighbors saw me watching

Cf. They <u>saw</u> me <u>fall</u>, We <u>heard</u> people <u>screaming</u>, I <u>heard</u> my father <u>shout</u> my name

§61 My mother saw me packing my bundle

V + O + adj: §67 all he did was kiss them [eyes] shut

MF's EFL Resources

- The Talking People Podcast (my own): http://www.talkingpeople.net/tppodcast/
- The Talking People website > C1 page > free download of the C1 Resource Pack (methodology) https://www.talkingpeople.net/ (my own)
- List of MF's course blogs: https://micaelaford.wordpress.com/2017/04/15/free-course-blogs-at-wordpress-thanks/ (free, thanks to Wordpress!)
- Other Blog projects: list at https://micaelaford.wordpress.com/2017/03/12/otros-blogs/ (free, thanks to various sites offering free services. Thanks so much!)

like worksheets on Language Learning from Reading resource blog

Key