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Teaching Cultural Diversity through both Irish Film and Folklore

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Unit Objectives

Social Studies Objectives

- Content Standard 1.0: Students will read, view and listen to multiple sources that reflect the diversity of culture

- Content Standard 3.0: Students will read, view and listen to multiple sources concerning geography

- Content Standard 3.0: Students will read, view and listen to multiple sources concerning economics

Language Arts/English Objectives

- Content Standard 1.0 / Performance Standard 1.1: Student will demonstrate strategic skills that ensure success in reading

- Content Standard 1.0 / Performance Standard 1.2: Student will demonstrate strategies used before, during, and after specific reading tasks

- Content Standard 1.0 / Performance Standard 3.1: Student will demonstrate strategic speaking skill in order to ensure success in verbal communication

- Content Standard 1.0 / Performance Standard 4.1: Student will demonstrate strategic listening skills in order to ensure success in listening tasks

- Content Standard 1.0 / Performance Standard 4.2: Student will demonstrate strategies used before, during, and after specific reading listening tasks

- Content Standard 1.0 / Performance Standard 5.0 : Student will demonstrate strategic viewing skills by interpreting meaning from visual resources

Rationale

The New Haven Public School's fifth grade curriculum focuses on developing the students' ability to use active reading strategies to form an initial understanding of a literary work. "Initial Understanding" is a term that encompasses the ability to identify themes, character motivations and development, setting, main ideas, and the practice of before, during, and after reading strategies. The student must convey ideas both orally and through the written response. In addition, students should be exposed to experiences, vocabulary, and cultures that are unfamiliar to them.

I hope to develop a unit for my fifth graders that exposes them to cultural diversity through the use of both film and literature. Cinema is an integral part in almost every child's understanding of the surrounding environment; the cinema is a means by which I can encourage my students to form an understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity. Cinema can entrance students and expose them to a world that is beyond their own limited personal experiences. It is a common thread that is able to interconnect individuals from varying regions of the world. By exposing my students to both film and literature, from a different geographical location, I will be able to expose them to a culture that has both similarities and differences to their own. Throughout the unit, my students will explore the Irish culture and discuss the differences between the Irish folktales that have survived for generations, and the American legends (Halloween, Santa Claus, tooth fairy) that have influenced American children for centuries. In addition, my students will become exposed to a culture that has had many political and personal conflicts based on religious beliefs; hopefully, my students will begin to appreciate and recognize their own freedom and the importance of being able to choose their own religious beliefs. Also, geographically, they will study the physical environment of Ireland and contemplate the ramifications of living on an island exemplified by lowlands, pastures and bogs. They will understand the correlation between the geographical characteristics of Ireland and the influence they have both on the Irish culture and economy. It is my hope that if children are exposed to cultural diversity in a pleasurable and educational manner, there may be more understanding and compassion for the differences that exist.

The basis for my unit will be Ireland, specifically focusing on common themes explored within Irish folktales (both traditional and modern interpretations), poetry, and Irish cinema. In studying these genre, we will explore the importance of land within the Irish culture (geographically and topographically) and the customs and beliefs of the people.

Conclusively, I hope to take my students on a magical journey throughout Ireland and expose them to the uniqueness of this fascinating culture. In doing so, I hope they begin to appreciate the language, traditions, and customs of the Irish people while gaining a respect and understanding for what may be different.

Ireland

Geography, Topography, and a Political Perspective

There are four provinces in Ireland: Connacht (western Ireland), Munster (southern Ireland), Leinster (eastern Ireland), and Ulster (Northern Ireland). The Republic of Ireland is comprised of the provinces of Connacht, Munster, and Leinster; the province of Ulster is referred to as Northern Ireland and is under Britain's jurisdiction. Northern and Southern Ireland are differentiated not only by geographical differences, but also by political and religious views. Approximately 5/6 of the 27,136 square mile island is referred to as the Republic of Ireland and claimed freedom during the year 1922, when it separated from Britain's rule. This was not an easy transition of political power for the Irish, but rather the beginning of a tumultuous war between Northern Ireland and the Republic. They fought not only because the Republic wanted Britain to relinquish power over Northern Ireland, but also because of a difference in religious values and beliefs (Spencer, 14). Primarily Roman Catholic prior to the mid 16th century, Ireland was influenced by England's schism from the Roman Catholic Church during the reign of King Henry VIII. Only a small percentage (about 10%) of the Republic of Ireland is Protestant, including Methodist and Presbyterian, however Northern Ireland is predominately Protestant and thus this religious rivalry has played an integral role in the separation of Northern and Southern Ireland and has been the foundation for many political issues and disputes. Interestingly, this religious division is not apparent within the Republic of Ireland because they do not feel threatened by the minority of Protestants politically or religiously (Spencer, 26). Subsequently, religion plays an important part within the Irish culture, as well as its political history. It was not until The Good Friday Peace Agreement, signed in 1998, that the Protestants and Catholics reached a cease-fire and agreed to stop the fighting and vandalism (Spencer, 14) The importance of religion to the Irish culture is exemplified through the role of religious characters throughout literature and film, as apparent in Sheridan's *The Field* .

Topographically, there are several features unique to Ireland; the bogs are one of the most significant topographical features that exemplify Ireland's uniqueness. Ireland's climate is conducive to the development of this wetland resource. There are two types of bogs that are found in Ireland: blanket bogs (man-made), and raised bogs (nature produced). The blanket bog is typically found in areas of western Ireland where it characteristically has exceptionally high rates of rainfall per year. It is referred to as the blanket bog because from a distance it appears to cover and protect the land. Ironically, the bog does protect Ireland's history; archaeologists have found the exploration and research of bogs to be beneficial in acquiring artifacts and fossils from centuries past. Additionally, the bogs offer access to clean water and enable the water supply to be preserved from environmental influences. Bogs also provide a source of fuel for the Irish; the top layer of the bog, referred to as peat or *turf* once cut, can be recycled and used as a source of fuel. Unfortunately, because it is used as such a valuable resource, the blanket bog is not able to reproduce as quickly as it is being destroyed (www.Wesleyjohnston.com).

In contrast, the raised bogs are found primarily in central Ireland and are a naturally occurring wetland. The raised bogs originally formed after the cessation of the Ice Age at which point many lakes formed throughout central Ireland. As time passed, the lakes became covered with peat and the water supply diminished. However, the raised bogs are still a significant wetland feature in Ireland and much is being done to conserve and preserve these wetlands. (<http://www.wesleyjohnston.com>).

Industry and Economy

Ireland has had a primarily agricultural and horticultural economy: cattle, sheep, hogs, horses, and poultry as well as wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, hay, turnips, and sugar beet crops. Most of rural Ireland is found in the South Eastern portion of the country. More recently, there has been environmental action taken to preserve these agricultural areas and reforestation programs have been implemented.

Although it is not a significant part of the Irish economy, the fishing industry does play a minute role. Most of the fishing industry exists near the coastal shores of Ireland, however, the inland water regions are known for eel, trout, and salmon. The Irish did not exploit the sea like most Island inhabitants. Perhaps this reverence for the sea, as well as their fear of the unknown, originated amongst the folktales and myths about sea - maidens, mermaids, selkies, and merrows. Since it is believed that upon death the human soul can be transformed into a sea animal, insect, or other inhuman form, it would seem disrespectful to the Irish to fish among these creatures. Especially since those mythical creatures that inhabit the areas closest to the shoreline are most probably protecting their children and spouses. Additionally, since merrows and mermaids were perceived as the bearer of tumultuous weather, I believe the Irish would prefer to stay away from the waters where there would be a greater opportunity to bear witness to one these mythical creatures.

In addition to the fishing and agricultural industries, mining also plays a small, but significant, role in developing Ireland's economy. Ireland is best known for its production of zinc, lead, limestone, and other mineral deposits (<http://www.angelfire.com/ca/irelandhistory/1998.html>).

Since the 1970s, Ireland's economy has been influenced by both the technological/computing and chemical industries. These industries have provided the Irish with a more metropolitan way of life by offering better paying jobs and an incentive to move from rural Ireland to the city. Consequently, tourism has also increased and has been an important factor in the success of the Irish economy. Additionally, the exportation of textiles, such as Donegal tweed, Irish linen, and Aran sweaters, have helped the economy because they are in high demand throughout the world (Spencer, 18).

Language and the Oral Tradition

Prior to the early 16th century, Gaelic was the predominate language of Ireland.

Presently, Ireland is an English speaking country although there is still a small percentage, about 11% who speak the traditional Irish language, Gaelic, fluently; only 2% speak the language regularly. Unlike English's 26-letter alphabet, Gaelic consists of an 18-letter alphabet, 5 vowels and 13 consonants. A derivative of the Celtic language, the language is unique because emphasis is continually placed on the first syllable of the word (Spencer, 28).

Storytelling plays a significant role within the Irish culture, especially prior to the advancement of technology and the invention of radio and television. The oral tradition not only places emphasis on the eloquence of the Irish language, but also became a means by which one could entertain and share the legends, myths, and folktales of their Irish ancestors. The stories were shared among family members, during festivals and seasonal celebrations, and in other social atmospheres, like pubs. It is believed that it is Ireland's emphasis on the oral tradition that has led many to pursue writing as a career (to name a few, James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, and Frank McCourt) (Spencer, 28-29).

Travelers: Ireland's Sub-Culture

Unlike America's "melting Pot," Ireland consists of a homogenous group of people whose ancestors are

primarily of Celt, Norse, or English ethnicity. This is significant because, unlike America which is representative of a vast compilation of ethnic diversity, Ireland has not yet been infiltrated with excessive numbers of immigrants from neighboring regions. Although there is a significant geographical difference between rural and suburban Ireland, there is less of a class distinction due to wealth compared to other countries such as America. The exception to this, however, is the poor group of individuals known as the “Travelers”, or more derogatorily referred to as *Tinkers*. The origin of these traveling people is not well-known; it is believed the Travelers’ ancestors were traveling tradesmen or tins men, thus the nickname tinker originated. Having been evicted from their land and home, partly due to the British influence in Ireland, the *Travelers* journeyed from one place to another begging for food and money. The *Travelers* are perceived as unhygienic, uncivilized, and uneducated individuals. More recently, there has been governmental intervention to encourage and support *Travelers* to receive assistance and live in tenements and project housing in the hopes of pursuing a more stable and healthy lifestyle (the life of the travelers and their inability to settle down is conveyed through the movie *Into the West*). Presently, there are still a minority of *Travelers* that continue to reside in aluminum trailers, which contain all their belongings. They travel along the side of the road. During the early 60’s it would have been more common for someone to witness the *Travelers* living in a caravan, drawn by horse; or in a tent near the roadside. The common conception of the *Travelers* is that they live a disease infested lifestyle and are unhygienic due to poor cleansing habits. Subsequently, *Travelers* have a very low life expectancy and a relatively high infant mortality rate; this is also exemplified in the movie *Into the West* with the premature death of the young woman during childbirth. (<http://www.irish-society.org>).

Geographic Exploration of Ireland through Film

Through viewing the films, *The Secret of Roan Inish*, *The Field*, and *Into the West*, one can take a geographical journey through the uniquely beautiful and ethereal Ireland. We begin our journey with *The Field* set in the “Connemara village of Leean, overshadowed by the wet and misty mountains of Connemara and Mayo (<http://www.compleatseanbean.com/field>).” One of the more dramatic scenes in the film, where the wealthy American, Bull, and Bull’s son (Tadgh) confront each other concerning the sale of a sentimental piece of land, is set near the Erriff River, which is located at Aasleagh Falls near the village of Leenane. As our cinematic journey progresses, we are taken to Dublin where young Fiona, the main character of *The Secret of Roan Inish*, had initially resided with her father until he deemed it in her best interest to return to her grandparents fishing village in Ireland’s County Donegal to live. Fiona is intrigued by the view of the Island of Roan Inish which can be seen from the coast line of this western Irish village (*The Secret of Roan Inish*). On a journey similar to Fiona’s, the two young boys, Ossie and Tito in *Into the West* also begin their journey in the urban and metropolitan eastern Ireland city of Dublin. The boys, guided by a magical horse named Tir na nOg, journey into the western regions of Ireland. Our cinematic journey is an excellent means by which to expose students to the various geographical characteristics of Ireland and the significant differences between the eastern and western regions.

Irish Folktales

All the Words that I gather,

And all the words that I write,

Must spread their wings untiring,
And never rest in their flight,
Till they come where your sad, sad heart is,
And sing to you in the night,
Beyond shore the waters are moving,
Storm darkened or starry bright.

W.B. Yeats

London, January 1892

Characteristics of the Folktale

Irish folktales are magical stories that are imaginative, inspirational, and superstitious. These tales have survived centuries of retelling and interpretations by many, but they still entrance the audience and capture their imagination. There is a definitive style and tone to Irish folktales that appeals to both children and adults; folktales are an excellent instructional tool which one may use to expose children to the essential literary elements such as tone, theme, and style. The importance of the folktale within the Irish culture cannot be dismissed.

“Folktales are full of simplicity and musical occurrences for they are the literature of a class for whom every incident in the old rut of birth, love, pain, and death has cropped up unchanged for centuries: who have steeped everything in the heart; to which everything is a symbol (Yeats, X).” Folktales provide a means by which the individual can journey into a mysterious and unknown land and discover a world with fairies, mermaids, ghosts, magic, and leprechauns. It is evident that folktales enable the Irish to make sense of tragedies existent within their own lives. It is thought that “perhaps, it is helpful to think that the souls of the dead often take the shapes of animals, sometimes insects, and beautiful to believe that a butterfly fluttering near a corpse could be the soul telling us that it has entered upon its immortal happiness (Yeats, X1).” There is a solace sought by the Irish that is provided through the folktale. This is exemplified in both films, *The Secret of Roan Inish* and *Into the West*. In both films, the folktale is interwoven and assists in explaining the tragic course of events that has occurred in the lives of the young characters. In *The Secret of Roan Inish*, the myth of the selkie, a magical creature that is a seal by day and a human by night, is the premise of the film. The selkies are believed to be of extraordinary beauty and characteristically have raven black hair and eyes. These mythical creatures swim near the shores to protect and be near their families (www.irishfestivals.net/selkies).

The Irish Folktale began as an oral tradition; within the village the traditional tales survived generations. The folktale is a significant part of the Irish culture and not something readily shared with foreigners, at least not through the oral tradition. To the Irish, retelling a folktale is sacred to their family, and at times can be perceived as being superstitious. This is exemplified in the film, *The Secret of Roan Inish*; the grandmother is insistent that the grandfather not share the tale of the selkie with his young granddaughter, Fiona. The grandfather, ignoring the superstitious warnings of his wife, tells the tale to an impressionable Fiona. There are however, various interpretations of a folktale that must exist. It is typical for the villagers to vote on which version of the folktale is closest to the Irish myth and will be the one retold to future generations. I believe this

gives tremendous insight into the development of the folktale through oral tradition and the cultural importance in preserving the original myth. (Yeats, 5-6)

The folktale was used to explore answers to questions pertaining to life and death; it was used to explain tragedies that occurred, such as the Great Potato Famine in 1845-1850. The Folktale was used for entertainment as well as for providing solace and meaning to those things that are beyond one's rationalization or understanding.

Symbolism of Mythical Creatures

There are two types of fairies within Irish folklore: the sociable and the solitary. Sociable fairies are more tenderhearted and generous (Yeats, 381), while the solitary fairies, like the Leprechaun, are uncharitable and mischievous.

The Leprechaun (believed to be the child of an "evil spirit and a debased fairy") is a mischievous spirit that is perceived as the "practical joker" within the Irish folktale. Often considered "gloomy and terrible in some way", the leprechaun's sole purpose is to assemble and mend shoes while acquiring great wealth. If you behold a leprechaun mending a shoe, it is believed that he can be coerced into giving you gold. However, if you momentarily look away, he will vanish. (Yeats, 76) the typical attire of the leprechaun is a seven button, red overcoat with a hat. (Yeats 381-382)

"The Fear Laith," or the Gray Man, was a musty smelling, fog covered man who frequented the coastal areas, high ground, and boggy hollows. To safeguard their potatoes from the Fear Liath, people sprinkled holy water and placed religious medals around the storage area (Bartoletti, 9). Those who did not heed the warnings of the myths of these solitary fairies discovered that their potatoes rotted and were inedible (Bartoletti, 9). Religion plays a significant role among the Irish because it provides a means by which one can use traditional religious customs to protect one's family from "evil."

Sociable fairies are the "sea-maids," merrows (water fairies capable of shape-changing), and mermaids. Although they are not perceived to be as mischievous as the solitary fairies, some sociable fairies symbolize unfortunate occurrences. For example, the mermaid is symbolic of tumultuous weather (Yeats, 381).

These mythical creatures are integral to the Irish culture and their acceptance and understanding of tragedies that occur within their village. For example the travelers (Irish gypsies) believe that it is the fairies that cause the great winds that encumber their traveling from place to place (Bartoletti, 10).

The Importance of the Folktale in both *The Secret of Roan Inish* and *Into the West*

"The souls of the dead sometimes take the shape of animals...if you see one fluttering near a corpse that is the soul, and is a sign of having entered immortal happiness (Yeats, 118)."

Both Irish films, *Into the West* and *the Secret of Roan Inish*, use the retelling of a folktale by a grandfather to enhance the story and create a more magical, mystical, and ethereal tone to the works. As we study these two films, it is important one understands the role and significance of the folktale within the Irish culture. The folktale becomes the foundation upon which people find courage, hope, and understanding within an otherwise dismal situation or tragedy. In both films, the main character's story is interwoven within a folktale; as the film progresses the correlation between the characters' development and awakening is directly related to their experiences and understanding of the folktale.

In *The Secret of Roan Inish*, it is the tale of the selkies that becomes the foundation upon which Fiona begins her spiritual and mystical journey. *Into the West* uses the “glorious white stallion by the name of Tir na nOg,” a figure in Irish legends (http://movie-reviews.colossus.net/movies/i/into_west.html) to tell the tale of Ossie and Tito as they escape the confinements of the urban Dublin and the depressive alcoholic state of their widowed father, Pap Riley in search of a better life. The most significant similarity between both films is the myth that human souls are reincarnated as animals in order to protect the loved ones left behind; specifically as a seal in *The Secret of Roan Inish* and a stallion in *Into the West*.

Western Myth: Perceptions within America and Ireland

America: The Western Myth

The western myth is directly correlated to the western expansion that occurred in America during the latter part of the 19th century. Representing America’s future, the west is perceived as uncharted territory, romantic, and mysterious. This western myth is conveyed through both literature and the cinema. Typically characteristic of all westerns was a good vs. evil plot, an inherent desire to achieve justice, and an exigency for a better life. (<http://www.filmsite.org/westernfilms.html>).

Ireland

The myth of Ireland’s “west” is vastly different from America’s “west” for one main reason: in Ireland the west represented the ancestral rural lands while in America the colonists were expanding into a west that was unknown territory and into a new frontier. Those residing in Western Ireland moved east in order to pursue a better and more metropolitan existence. Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland, was situated on the eastern coast of Ireland and represented a flourishing metropolis. Unlike the rural lowlands of Western Ireland, Dublin is symbolic of an economically growing and developing city (nearly one million inhabit the city and the outlying areas): highways, buildings, residential housing, apartments, malls, and public buildings invited the western natives of Ireland to pursue a better more promising life within a cosmopolitan environment (Spencer, 6-7). The Irish became enthralled with returning to the west because they were searching for their ancestral roots. Ireland’s “west” symbolized hope, family values, and a more traditional way of life.

The Theme of the Western Myth as Conveyed through the films *The Secret of Roan Inish* and *Into the West*

In addition to the importance of the folktale within Irish cinema there is an underlying theme of hope and courage that is provided through the integration of the western myth into these cinematic works. The characters in both movies are hoping for a different life and are trying to understand the past while finding the courage to explore the future. In both movies, the main characters are exploring unfamiliar western regions of Ireland in the hopes of understanding past tragedies in their lives and finding solace. Both Irish films are characterized by “an incomplete family and it is only in the west and in rejecting the alienating confines of the city that the malaise afflicting the two families can be eased (McLoone, 211). In *Into the West*, two young

brothers (Ossie and Tito) journey into Western Ireland with the help of a magical stallion. Initially, the boys attempt to hide their horse within the confined space of their city apartment. Although the boys are resistant, the authorities arrive and demand the immediate removal of the horse from the premises. Thus, the boys begin their journey toward western Ireland and the coast. Unbeknownst to them, the horse takes the boys on a journey into their past. The boys are forced to recognize their own ancestral roots, which had previously been stifled by the modernity of the east. The boys were travelers (groups of Irish people who traveled from one place to another throughout Ireland). Their magical journey into the past eventually helps bring their family together again through the guidance of a magical horse who ultimately is the reincarnation of their deceased mother protecting her sons and husband from a life of unhappiness and desolation. The west represents hope for a different and more fortunate life; a life that helps the boys understand the death of their mother and the demise of their father, Papa Riley. The idea of the west representing hope and a better life has been embedded within the young boy's mind, as well as the audiences, through the boys' obsession with watching the old American westerns. Ironically, the father disapproves of the boys watching so many westerns and forbids it. Determined to continue this obsession, the boys are satisfied with watching the westerns through a hole in the wall of their apartment. Their persistence is reflective of their need to journey into the west and unveil their Irish ancestry and traditions.

In *The Secret of Roan Inish*, a distraught father sends his daughter to her grandparents' house in a rural region of Ireland to seek solace and find a new beginning. Ten-year old Fiona becomes entranced by the mystique of her native island, located off the coast of western Ireland. Consequentially, she is intrigued by the superstitious folk tales, specifically about the selkies, that her grandfather and neighbors retell. Having suffered through the death of both her brother and her mother, Fiona is seeking comfort from her past and hoping for a better future. She persuades her grandfather to allow her to visit her past by journeying by sea to this "western" mythical place which she calls home. There, Fiona begins to find solace in what she perceives to be unworldly and mythical messages from her past. Having journeyed into the western regions of Ireland, Fiona acknowledges the existence of a symbolic relationship between the east and the west and a need for a balance between tradition and modernity. The grandmother represents someone who has separated herself from her family's traditions and beliefs in search of what was believed to be a more promising future in *modern* Ireland. Having migrated to the city in search of work, the grandmother has left her history behind and is distraught that Fiona pursues what the grandmother has so meticulously tried to disregard. Fiona is seeking solace and trying to understand the tragic occurrences in her young life. In doing so, she delves into her family's past and forces herself and others on a magical journey that provides reconciliation between tradition and modernity. It is apparent that it is the integration of the past and present that allows for character development and growth.

Lesson Plans

Lesson #1: The Island of Ireland: Exploration of the geography, culture, and economy of Ireland through the film, *The Field*.

Objectives: Students will read, view and listen to multiple sources that reflect the diversity of culture. Students will read, view and listen to multiple sources concerning geography. Students will read, view and listen to multiple sources concerning economics.

Materials: VHS tape of *The Field* , detailed topographical / geographical maps of Ireland, *Ireland: A Portrait of the Country through its Festivals and Traditions*, *Countries of the World: Ireland*, *Black Potatoes: The story of the Great Irish Famine* , internet, and highlighters.

Activity:

- Each group of three students will be given a topographical and a geographical map and will be given approximately 10 minutes to study the maps independently.
- During a teacher directed session, the students will learn how to read the maps, become familiar with the different provinces, counties, and waterways. Within a whole class format students will create a Venn diagram recognizing the notable differences and similarities between America and Ireland.
- During the viewing of the film, *The Field* , each student will be required to record observations relating to one of the following categories: economy, geography, and culture
- Given a “film record journal” the student will record observations during the viewing
- After the viewing, the students will be given approximately 10 minutes to discuss what they viewed and recorded.
- Class discussion will ensue pertaining to the geographical, economical, and cultural aspects of the film. Teacher will need to direct and prompt discussions as deemed necessary. Students will highlight the areas on the maps the movie visited.
- Each group will then choose to research one aspect of the film: culture (traveling people / language /social life / church, etc.) economy (farming / occupations within the community / poverty vs. wealth), or geography (the land, bogs, farmland, water)
- Upon completing their research, the students will be asked to complete the Venn diagram and the comparison between Ireland and America, focusing on all aspects of a region: geography, culture, and economy

Assessment: Group presentation and participation

Lesson #2: The Western Myth

Objectives: Students will read, view and listen to multiple sources concerning geography. Students will gain an understanding of western expansion as it pertains to America and Ireland.

Activity:

- Students will access prior knowledge of American Western Expansion during a brainstorming activity. Students will discuss Americans motives for traveling into the western frontier

- Students will be provided with background knowledge pertaining to Ireland and how western Ireland was established and settled while eastern Ireland developed as the Irish moved towards the east in pursuit of a more metropolitan and urban environment

- Students will be provided with information regarding how the west, in both American and Irish legend, represents hope and a better life.

Assessment: Students will use their acquired knowledge to aid in their understanding and analysis of the films, *The Secret of Roan Inish* and *Into the West*

Lesson #3: Approach to Literature: Irish Folktales and Poetry

Objectives: Students will read, view and listen to multiple sources that reflect the diversity of a culture. Student will demonstrate strategic skills that ensure success in reading. Student will demonstrate strategies used before, during, and after specific reading tasks. Student will demonstrate strategic speaking skills in order to ensure success in verbal communication. Students will construct a book mobile and give a short presentation to the class

Materials: *The Sailor who Captured the Sea and Other Celtic Tales*; *Brave Margaret*; *Poetry for Young People*; *William Butler Yeats*; construction paper, crayons, markers, string, wooden sticks

Activity:

- Create a web, with *Folk Tale* as the focal point, and display it in the room. Students will identify all the components of a folk tale as the teacher reads one aloud. Students will be introduced to the folk tale and the qualities that identify this genre: magic, imagination, storytelling, language (metaphor and similes), and rhythm. These folk tales are unique to a culture because they explore myths and stories that have survived centuries. Folk tales began as an oral tradition and developed through various interpretations, into the tales we will read in written format

- Students will practice before, during, and after reading strategies as the tale is being read

- Students will identify vocabulary words and language that is significant in the telling of this tale

- Create a web, with Poetry as the focal point, and display it in the room. Students will identify all the components of this genre as the teacher reads one of Yeats' poems aloud. Students will be introduced to the poem and the qualities that identify this genre: imagination, ideas, figurative language (metaphor and similes), and rhythm. Many of Yeats' poems are unique to the Irish culture because they explore the myths and geography of this mystical island.

- Students will identify vocabulary words and language that are significant in the understanding of this poem.

- Students will discuss in a whole class format the similarities and differences between their own experiences and culture (American legends such as Halloween, Tooth Fairy, Easter Bunny, Santa Clause, Boogey monster) in comparison to that of the Irish folktales and poems.

- Students will work in groups and choose either a poem or folktale to present to the class. Their presentation will consist of a book mobile (with the mobile parts created to represent the main character, setting, problem, and solution) and a summary of the story/poem.

Assessment: Students will be assessed on their presentation, book mobile and ability to summarize the story / poem in a concise and articulate manner.

Lesson #4: Analysis of Irish Film: *The Secret of Roan Inish* and *Into the West*

Objectives: Student will demonstrate strategic viewing skills by interpreting meaning from visual resources.

Materials: The Films: *The Secret of Roan Inish* and *Into the West* .

Activity:

- Each group of three students will be given their topographical and geographical maps from the previous lesson

- During the viewing of the film, *Secret of Roan Inish* , each student will be required to record observations relating to one of the following categories: economy, geography, and culture

- Given a “film record journal” the student will record observations during the viewing

- After the viewing, the students will be given approximately 10 minutes to discuss what they viewed and recorded.

- Class discussion will ensue pertaining to the geographical, economical, and cultural aspects of the film. Teacher will need to direct and prompt discussions as deemed necessary

- Each group will then choose to research one aspect of the film: culture (traveling people / language /social life / church, etc.) economy (farming / occupations within the community / poverty vs. wealth), or geography (the land, bogs, farmland, water)

- This will be repeated for the viewing of the film: *Into the West*

Assessment: Group presentation and participation

Annotated Bibliography

Resources for Teachers

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *Black Potatoes: The Story of the Great Irish Famine, 1845 - 1850* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001. Campbell writes about the five-year famine that began in Ireland in 1845, when the potato crops were attacked by a horrific blight that destroyed the main source of food for the Irish. Campbell tells the story of the Irish, both young and old, whose perseverance and beliefs during this hardship influence their understanding of why this blight has occurred. The book is divided into 10 chapters, including a map of the Irish counties and ports, a timeline, bibliography, and index.

Gantz, Jeffrey. *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*. England: Penguin, 1983. This is geared toward the scholar of Irish Literature. The book is comprised of myths and sagas first told during the 8th century AD. These are the first written translations of oral stories originally told by the Irish centuries before Christ. Introduction, bibliography, and index are included.

Herr, Cheryl. *The Field*. Ireland: Cork University Press, 2002. The initial chapter is a short biography of the playwright, John B. Keane, who wrote *The Field* in 1965. The remaining two chapters discuss film techniques, motivating factors for particular scenes, and includes a short biography of Jim Sheridan and his directorial techniques used while filming this movie. Also, there are several black and white illustrations / photographs as well as a bibliography.

Jostens. *Folk Tales*. Jostens Learning Cooperation, 1991. Excellent teacher's resource for understanding the characteristics of the folktale as a genre. Also provides detailed lesson plans on how to teach students how to write their own folktale.

Jostens. *Writing Poetry*. Jostens Learning Cooperation, 1991. Excellent teacher's resource for understanding the characteristics of poetry as a genre. Also provides detailed lesson plans on how to teach students how to write and analyze poetry.

McLoone, Martin. *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 2000. The author discusses the historical, cultural, political, and societal influences on the eventual emergence of Irish Film. McLoone delves into the cinematic world of Irish film and writes about the formation of Ireland's first film culture, prevalent themes / issues existent within these films, short films, and the European influence on the Irish film culture.

O'Faolain, Sean. *The Story of the Irish People*. New York: Avenel Books, 1982. The author tells the story of the Irish people and the societal and historical influences that helped develop them as a civilization. This is an excellent resource if one already has an understanding of the Irish culture.

Spencer, Shannon. *Countries of the World: Ireland*. Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2000. Comprehensive resource that encompasses all aspects of Ireland's culture: festivals, government, economy, maps, etc. Spencer's book is a suitable resource for students, as well as teachers, because it is well written, concise and very informative. Includes a great selection of photographs from both past and present Ireland.

Walker, Brian. *Faces of Ireland: 1875 - 1925, A Photographic and Literary Picture of the Past*. New York: Amaryllis Press, 1984. Excellent source for black and white photographs of Ireland.

Yeats, W.B. *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983. Compilation of folktales from the latter part of the 19th century. This is an excellent reference for the traditional tales of fairies, leprechauns, and other mythical Irish characters. Not suitable for children but excellent to understand where the children's tales originated.

Resources for Students

Allison, Jonathon. *Poetry for Young People: William Butler Yeats*. New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 2002. Although Yeats may be considered unsuitable for children because of the difficulty in interpreting his poetry, Allison successfully makes it possible to introduce children to the poetry of a Nobel Laureate. For each poem there is a painted illustration, a preface providing background information to the child, and a footnote glossary.

DePaola, Tomie. *Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato: An Irish Folktale*. New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1992. Picture book about an Irish man who makes a deal with a leprechaun because he is too lazy to work in the potato field to support his family. Wonderful resource to introduce children to the Irish folktales and the magic of these legends; the children can relate to both DePaola's works and the theme of the story.

Lattimore, Deborah Nourse. *The Sailor Who Captured the Sea: A Story of the Book of Kells*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991. Fourth grade reading level and suitable for independent reading. There are three different tales; the first is about a young artist, the second about a Scottish king who needs to rescue his sons from the Queen of the Fairies, and the third is a tale about ghosts, knights, and a beautiful maiden.

MacManus, Seamus. *Favorite Irish Folktales*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999. Compilation of 15 folktales that are geared for young adults. However, they are suitable for younger children as an oral and guided reading experience. There is a rendition of the fairy tale Rumpelstiltskin that most children are already familiar with.

San Souci. *Brave Margaret*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2002. Margaret is a spirited young woman whose bravery enables her to slay the monster, defend herself against the sorceress, and save her own life and that of her true love. Children love the story because, unlike most tales, the heroine is a young woman. Brave Margaret also captures the essence of Irish folktales through the author's use of the magical and mystical.

Films

The Field. Dir. *Jim Sheridan*. With Richard Harris and Sean Bean, 1990. A film about the impact of socialization and modern influences on Ireland's rural / agricultural community.

Into the West. Dir. *Mike Newel*. With Gabriel Byrne and Ellen Barkin, 1992. Tale about two young motherless boys who journey into western Ireland with the help of a magical horse in search of a better life.

The Secret of Roan Inish. Dir. *John Sayles*. With Jeni Courtney and Pat Slowey.

Columbia Tri-Star, 1994. Story about a young girl who has been sent to her Grandparents' house after tragedy has struck her family. She is enthralled by the mystical tales her grandfather tells her; she, herself, experiences the magic of Ireland much to the dismay of her grandmother and other villagers.

The Quiet Man. Dir. *John Ford*. With John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara, 1952. A former boxer returns to his native Ireland to escape his past and America's inferno: modernization and industrialization. Sean Thornton is seeking solace within Ireland's lavish lands and mythical heritage.

Websites

<http://www.imdb.com>. Internet Movie Data Base. Excellent source for information pertaining to an array of genre and films, especially international cinema. Provides a plot summary as well as pertinent information regarding filming locale, directors, casting, producers, reviews, and distribution.

<http://www.angelfire.com/ca/irelandhistory/1998.html#ten>. Informative and comprehensive website offering historical facts about Ireland.

movie-reviews.colossus.net/movies/i/into_west.html. A detailed review of the film *Into the West*.

www.compleatseanbean.com/field. A detailed review of *The Field*. Contains important information regarding the geographical setting of the film.

www.irishfestivals.net/selkies. Provides useful detailed information regarding the legend of the selkies.

www.filmsite.org/westernfilms.html. Resource for understanding the American Western as its own unique genre; also mentions the most significant American Westerns to be directed and produced.

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