



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2022 Volume II: The Long Fight for a Free Caribbean, 1700s-1959

Folktales from the Caribbean

Curriculum Unit 22.02.01
by Carol Boynton

Introduction

I teach in a self-contained classroom at Edgewood Magnet School in New Haven. I find the neighborhood/magnet setting a rewarding environment, with students coming to school each day from a variety of home circumstances and with differences in academic levels. As a result of these variables, the children have differing levels of background knowledge and life experiences. The classroom is a mixture of ethnicities, economic strata, and social and different emotional dispositions. Collaboration allows all students at all levels to learn in an inherently differentiated environment, learning new concepts and experiences through hands-on practices. Throughout the school year, the Kindergarten curriculum centers heavily on social development, which is certainly appropriate for five- and six-year-old children. Our school mission and vision statements focus on equity and inclusion, acknowledging and including everyone in our learning environment.

This folktale unit will be in direct alignment with my responsibility to design curricula that help our students learn social and community responsibility. The storybook, *African and Caribbean Folktales, Myths, and Legends*, by Wendy Shearer, will serve as a foundation for this unit. This text contains stories from Africa to the Caribbean, re-told for young readers - from the trickster tales of Anansi the spider to the story of how the leopard got his spots; from the tale of the king who wanted to touch the moon, to Aunt Misery's magical starfruit tree.

This particular book contains very few pictures, which allows us to research various examples of how these characters were depicted through art, where in the world these stories take place, and what we can learn from them. They will learn to ask questions about how and why these stories exist, how they traveled across the Atlantic Ocean, and what they tell us about the cultures that created them.

The following questions will help guide the rationale and purpose for the stories the students will learn through this unit: What do I hope to accomplish in bringing these stories to my students? What do my students gain knowledge about them and how can they understand different cultures through these characters? What strategies make the most sense for this unit and age group (primary students)? How did the history of the Caribbean shape these folktales? How do the characters help define the region they represent? What is the synthesis between the region and the text of the stories?

Folklore

Folklore can be defined as stories or beliefs of certain cultural groups that help keep culture alive throughout generations. These stories connect many cultures and can teach people valuable lessons. Oral stories are the oldest form of literature for children and have been the mainstay in explaining the ways of the world, life at home and abroad, and the genealogy of Caribbean life in this case. Without television or other distractors, the art of storytelling was the primary method of sharing information, often late into the night. Children learned the art of storytelling from their parents and elders, with the added embellishments to make the stories their own. While oral story forms are still widely available across the Caribbean, the written versions are rather recent, about the 1960s after many nations gained independence.

Whether it's sharing stories around the dinner table or making an extravagant show of a well-known tale, storytelling is integral to Caribbean cultural identity. Stories carry lessons of cultural and social value, tell various chapters of shared history, and entertain through an immersive communal experience. Listeners may have often heard different variations of the same tale, but even still, the speaker is expected to play up their story through song, dance, and different forms of theatricality.

The following are traditional Caribbean folklore characters and stories included in this curriculum unit, although there are many more that can be added as the unit is taught. Across resources, the spelling of many characters' names differs slightly, along with some nuances to their traits. This aligns perfectly with the tradition of oral storytelling - writing down what has been heard from a traveling storyteller.

Anansi The Spider-Man

Anansi is a spider man who originates from Ghana and is a popular character amongst folklore in Africa and the Caribbean. He is described as a keeper of knowledge and stories. He had six sons, each possessing a unique ability to add adventures to the Anansi stories. His stories often have a comedic flare and were meant to teach young children that actions have consequences. He is considered the "king of stories" who has a great depth of knowledge and wisdom but has no tolerance for boredom. The legacy of Anansi the Spider has been carried on throughout the years in a variety of different folktales. He is a notable figure in Caribbean Culture.

The Anansi stories are passed down from generation to generation and still have an honored status across the Caribbean islands and especially in Jamaica. Anansi or Anancy and Brer Anancy (Brother Anancy), as he is more frequently known in Jamaica known as both a cunning trickster and cultural hero who uses absurdity and humor to overcome situations involving those in authority as well as siblings, friends, or children. The Anansi stories have likely remained a staple of Jamaica because the Akan from Ghana were among the first Africans who arrived on the island, "thus the spider tales established a kind of historical priority over other West African folk heroes." ¹

Papa Bois & Mami Wata

Papa Bois originates from St. Lucia, Trinidad, and Tobago. Mami Wata, who is a figure in many different Caribbean islands, is a mermaid who protects the rivers in West Africa and Haiti. Papa Bois is an older man with a beard who, as the counterpart to Mami Wata, guards forests and land animals.

Mami Wata is a highly regarded spirit whose name means “Mother Water.” She has African-Atlantic origins, and she symbolizes the many sacred and spiritual qualities of water. Often considered a divine element, water represents the mysterious connection between life in the natural world and the spirits of the afterlife. As such, Mami Wata as a spiritual symbol carries many stories and meanings. She is both beautiful and fiercely protective, seductive and dangerous, and generous and vengeful. She often appears with the torso of a woman and the tail of a fish and is sometimes adorned with a snake.

Also known as “Maitre Bois” and “Daddy Bouchon,” Papa Bois is one of the many protectors of the forest. He mainly appears as an elderly man dressed in ragged clothes, but he also appears in the form of a deer. He represents hard work, strength, and dedication to the earth. He regards himself as the guardian of animals and trees. When hunters are in the area, Papa Bois will sound a cow’s horn as a warning to those who fall under his protection. He is passionate about his responsibility to the forest and does not tolerate the destruction of the land he oversees. Papa Bois is a noble being that teaches strength and integrity. ²

Bacoo

Bacoos originate from Guyana and Barbados. The word “Bacoo” means “little brother” or “short man,” which pretty much describes these creatures. They are small, bearded men who can appear in houses and have the ability to grant wishes, if treated well. They are said to be found in large rum bottles floating in the Caribbean Sea and are most active at night. They resemble leprechauns from Celtic mythology. They also have the fascinating power to shapeshift into other forms to trick their owners.

While they may seem like amusing companions to have, the legend of the Bacoos can take an extremely frightening turn. If they are treated with disrespect, they will no longer act as wish-granting companions. Instead, they will torture you until you do whatever it asks, and they will continue to live in a home until the owner of that residence is dead. “So, how do you treat a Bacoo well?” you may ask. Well, you must feed them bananas and milk daily and prevent them from causing chaos. The legend of Bacoos teaches us to be careful what we wish for and to always treat others respectfully.³

Jumbies

One of the most common parts of Caribbean folklore is the jumbie, which means ghost or spirit. They’re generally considered malevolent spirits that wreak havoc on humans, whether it’s an everyday irritation or a significant, life-changing event. However, some believe that not all jumbies are evil in nature and may in fact contain important meaning for whomever they’re haunting. Like the ghosts of North American ideology, jumbies represent the souls and spirits that are stuck between the worlds of the living and the dead. Various superstitions are followed to deflect or ward off jumbies.

A jumbie is a collection of entities and not just one specific one. The name and deeds of the jumbie depend entirely on where in the Caribbean it came from. Different cultures have different concepts of jumbies. The various kinds of jumbies found in Guyanese folklore reflect Guyana’s complex history and rich ethnic mosaic, drawing on African, Amerindian, East Indian, Dutch and English mythologies. Some of the stories from various parts of the Caribbean are similar, but the names are different.⁴

Looking for a Jumbie is reminiscent of the classics *Going on a Bear Hunt* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, but also completely unique. The language flows and rolls and the use of repetition make it an extra fun re-read for kids. In addition to being a great storytime book, the author’s note at the beginning help set the stage and can make for a launching point to begin learning about Caribbean folk tales.

The main character, Naya, knows that the night is perfect for searching for something scary, but with some new companions, she won't have to search alone. As Naya's mother puts her to bed, indoor and outdoor animals are exactly where they need to be. As the full moon and stars twinkle above, Naya has already decided she's going on an adventure. She's going to find a jumbie—a creature of Caribbean folklore—an especially scary one. Naya's path out from her warm, pink home into the lush, green outdoors. Over the course of her journey, Naya comes across some striking creatures that could be jumbies, but they're not quite scary enough. In fact, every creature she meets tonight is so friendly it joins her in her search for a scary jumbie. By the journey's end, her team is as vibrant and diverse as the stories and legends in which jumbies are traditionally found. Naya returns home eventually after introducing a whole cast of folk characters from the Douen to Mama D'Leau.

Lit'mahn Bittyun

Lit'mahn is a tiny fellow who is magical and mischievous. He is introduced to us in *The Girl Who Spun Gold*, Virginia Hamilton's West Indian retelling of the story of *Rumpelstiltskin*. It is the tale of a "lovely girl" named Quashiba who spins plain thread into gold. Big King, the young ruler of the land, rides by one day, meets Quashiba and her mama and becomes interested in her unique skill, as well as her beauty. He immediately thinks of the riches he could have. He decides to marry her on the condition that in one's year time she will need to weave for him three rooms full of golden things. Quashiba, thinking he will soon forget his request, marries Big King and begins a life of luxury. One year later, Big King keeps his promise and locks Quashiba away, threatening to keep her "cooped up forever and a year" if she does not weave the gold things he desires. As Quashiba is crying, Lit'mahn appears. He offers to make the golden things but she will need to guess the whole name by the end of the third day. If she cannot, he will make her "tiny, just like me" and carry "her off to live in my shade." Two days pass and she is unable to discover his name. That evening she eats supper with Big King and he tells a story about seeing a "funny little mahn" dancing and singing a song. The creature's name is Lit'mahn Bittyun. As Quashiba correctly guesses his name, Lit'mahn becomes so angry, that he pops into a million bitty flecks of gold.

This rendition of the story is told in the West Indian dialect, Patois. The rhythm of the language creates the sense of reciting the story. The character of Lit'mahn is an archetypal model of the obeah or Vodou person found in African and Caribbean folklore. Obeah is the term used to identify magic, sorcery, and religious practices from West African cultures and folk religions on the islands. The names and customs appear to come from African standards to the Caribbean story. "Big" is used to signify status in a village. Lit'mahn (Little man) is also indicative of the creature's status - he does not even live in a house but rather in a "big hole in the ground." The foods described throughout the story are widely eaten and enjoyed throughout the Caribbean.

Madame Fate

In the story, *Sugar Cane: A Caribbean Rapunzel* the princess is "strong and sweet," like the sugar cane she was named after, and she also proves to be brave, educated, musical, and kind. The story opens: "Come, sit on the balcony and look out over the sea. I have a story to tell you. ... The waves are always beginning a story that never comes to an end. You can hear them when they touch the shore, saying, Once..., Once..., Once..."

A young fisherman's wife expecting a child. She craves sugar cane. Her craving won't be satisfied with sweet pineapple, star fruit, custard apples, or coconut, so her husband sets out for the part of the island where sugar cane grows. On his long walk to get sugar cane, he comes across a mysterious gated house with a huge garden. He knocks on the door to ask for sugar cane, but when no one answers, he takes some and leaves. It's not long before his wife craves sugar cane again. He jokes that they will have to name the baby Sugar Cane if

she is a girl.

But when he goes to the garden again to seek sugar cane, he is caught by Madame Fate, a masked sorceress. The fisherman offers to pay, and Madame Fate agrees. "You will pay for what you have taken," agreed Madame Fate. "You will pay a high price. You have taken sugar cane from me, and I will take Sugar Cane from you." The sorceress seemed to already know the baby's name.

On the child's first birthday, Madame Fate takes her away from her loving parents and locks her in a tower on the other side of the island. Sugar Cane grows up left alone for months at a time by Madame Fate, who returns from her travels to visit and calls out, "You live in a tower without a stair, Sugar Cane, Sugar Cane, let down your hair."

Madame Fate climbs the ladder of her hair to visit. Most of the time, though, Sugar Cane lives with her pet monkey Callaloo, and she has lessons from spirit teachers whom Madame Fate conjured from the dead, ranging from an African griot who teaches her storytelling to an Arabian philosopher who teaches her math. She also learns music from spirit teachers, including singing, piano, and guitar.

Meanwhile, a handsome young man on the island has won music contests for the past three years at carnival time and is called the King of Song, or just "King." Music brings Sugar Cane and King together. One night he is out in his boat, dreaming up a new song. He hears her voice across the water and sees her face wavering in the water. After noticing her tower, he watches the sorceress use her special rhyme to ask Sugar Cane to let down her hair and later decides to try it for himself. After meeting her at the window and introducing himself, he asks if he can come into the tower. Their friendship blossoms as they play music together and he brings sweet treats for her pet monkey. At one point, Sugar Cane's ancient Egyptian drawing teacher notices that she's sketching a handsome face, and smiles. She starts weaving a ladder from her hair so she can escape the tower and see the island, and he starts bringing her beautiful jewels to pin in her hair.

Madame Fate discovers Sugar Cane's secret romance when she finds a beautiful jewel butterfly pin in her hair, but the butterfly magically flies away. And after Madame Fate cruelly chops off her hair, Sugar Cane and Callaloo climb down the ladder, with only a few jewels and candies that Callaloo has in his paw. Madame Fate whips up a storm in the ocean, but Sugar Cane is rescued by another of King's jewels - a golden wave that magically carries them to safety.

Sugar Cane and King find each other again in the town, reunited when she makes a guitar and the magical jewel butterfly lands on the strings of her guitar. King comes up the hill and they play their song together. The happy ending is complete with a wedding. At the wedding, Sugar Cane also is reunited with her parents when they recognize a coral necklace they gave her as a baby.

"Then there was dancing such as this island had never seen. What did they dance? They danced the rumba, the bolero, the samba, and the mambo. They danced salsa and merengue and the limbo. They danced zouk, calypso, sucu-sucu, and the cha-cha. Some of the people who went to that wedding are still dancing."

Krik? Krak!

In Haiti, if someone is going to tell a story, they'll say "Krik?" If the people listening wants to hear the story, they'll respond, "Krak!" It's a way for a storyteller to get the audience ready, similar to, "Come gather round..." in English, but it makes the audience more active.⁵

Teaching Strategies

The core idea of project-based learning is that real-world concerns capture students' interest and provoke serious thinking as the students acquire and apply new knowledge in a problem-solving context. The teacher plays the role of facilitator, working with students to frame worthwhile questions, structuring meaningful tasks, coaching both knowledge development and social skills, and carefully assessing what students have learned from the experience. Project-based learning helps prepare students for thinking and collaboration skills.

Organized around open-ended questioning, project-based learning helps focus the students' work and deepen their learning by centering on significant issues or problems. Projects begin by presenting students with knowledge and concepts and then, once learned, allow them to apply them. It requires inquiry to learn and/or create something new - an idea, an interpretation, or a new way of displaying what they have learned.

Most importantly, it requires critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. Students need to do much more than remember information—they need to use higher-order thinking skills. They also must learn to work as a team and contribute to a group effort. They must listen to others and make their ideas clear when speaking, be able to read a variety of material, write or otherwise express themselves in various modes, and make effective presentations. The format of this approach allows for student voice and choice. Students learn to work independently and take responsibility when they are asked to make choices. The opportunity to make choices, and to express their learning in their voice, also helps to increase students' educational engagement.

Within the activities in this unit, literacy strategies and approaches include reading comprehension designed to help students understand what they hear. They will identify how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning; draw inferences such as characters' feelings, thoughts, and motives from their actions and image; and justify inferences with evidence. Writing strategies will focus on students planning their writing by identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing (creating illustrations to support a story), selecting the appropriate form, and using other similar writing as models for their drawing and painting as they share their ideas, experiences, and imagination.

Classroom Activities

The broad objective of this unit is for students to learn that folktales present cultural information and they travel with the storytellers. More specifically, the students will learn that the stories from the Caribbean are stories that traveled across the Atlantic Ocean with people who were taken from Africa and brought to the islands in the Caribbean.

Have a globe, a world map, and a map of the Caribbean available and visible throughout the teaching of the unit. As stories are shared and learned, use these materials to help students visualize and begin to understand the movement of people and their stories. The map of the Caribbean will be used to “pin” the islands as they are introduced through the characters and their locations. The world map can also be used to track and trace the paths of the ships during the slave trade that would leave areas in Africa and arrive at these islands.

Students will learn character trait information in each character/folktale study as each is introduced through several stories and tales. Each study will cover two to three days, allowing enough time to introduce the folktale collection and discuss the ways the characters are depicted through images and descriptions. Students will have an opportunity to explore and practice illustrations of their own with each character study. The characters do not need to be introduced in the order listed below, only that they need to be presented through a variety of stories and visual/descriptive examples.

Character(s)	Books We Read	What We Learned
Anansi		
Papa Bois		
Mami Wata		
Jumbie		
Lit'mahn Bittyun		

Complete the chart over the course of teaching the unit. Explain the purpose – to keep track of our learning, to be able to compare, to refer to now and later. Read the names of the characters. Ask, “what do you notice about their names?” The students will likely recognize that the names are new and different. This is the opportunity to let the students know that they will be learning about new cultures, along with new words and vocabulary to talk about those interesting cultures.

Activity One: Anansi Stories

Overview: This West African god frequently takes the form of a spider and holds the knowledge of all the folktales and stories; he is cunning and tricky and uses his cunning guile to try to get what he wants. It is thought that Anansi was originally found in stories from the Ashanti and then the Akan people in Ghana, and from there the stories spread through West Africa. During the Atlantic slave trade, the stories crossed the ocean with the slaves through oral tradition. Especially in the Caribbean, Anansi’s cunning ways symbolized resistance to powerful slave owners. Anansi stories (and their variants) are considered “trickster” folktales because the small spider uses his intelligence and trickiness to triumph over larger creatures. Stories such as these are told by elders to pass down knowledge and moral messages to the younger generations. The stories were acted out by storytellers or even sung with dancing and drumming. In the 1950s, people began collecting famous stories and writing them down so that school children in could learn them. Before reading, ask the kids what they know about spiders. Locate Ghana on a world map and trace the slave trade route to the Caribbean. When the kids are listening to the many Anansi stories, ask them to pay attention to the characters, the setting, the plot (events in the story), and the main idea. When the initial problem is presented, pause the story and ask the kids:

What do you think will happen next? What do you think Anansi will do? What do we know about Anansi getting into situations or causing problems?

After gathering the students for the story, use the Haitian storytelling strategy of Krik? Krak! - call and response:

Teacher calls out: Krik? - Do you want to hear a story?

Students respond: Krak! - Yes, we do!

Read *Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti* by Gerald McDermott – Caldecott Winner

Synopsis: Anansi sets out on a long, difficult journey. Threatened by Fish and Falcon, he is saved from terrible fates by his sons. He tries to decide which of his sons he should reward. Calling upon Nyame, the God of All Things, Anansi solves his predicament. Nyame helps show Anansi how he can reward them all.

Lesson One:

Objective: The students will make personal connections to the text by identifying their strengths and how they could help their families.

Materials List: Map and globe, drawing paper, colored pencils, markers, crayons, and sketching pens

Anansi had six spider sons in the story and each one had a special talent. List the skills on the board or chart paper for students to use. Add a simple illustration or icon-type drawing beside each son's name for visual reference.

Anansi's sons and their role in the story:

See Trouble - knew Anansi was in trouble

Road Builder - made a road so they could all go to help him

River Drinker - drank the river to find the fish

Game Skinner - skinned the fish to save Anansi

Stone Thrower - threw the stone to make the Falcon drop Anansi

Cushion - caught Anansi so he would have a soft landing

Facilitate a discussion on how each of the sons' skills helped in saving Anansi. Ask students to work in pairs and share their own special talents and how they could be used to help their families. Then have students illustrate a picture of them showing how they use that talent to help their family. Ask for volunteers to share their illustrations with the class and see if any other students identified a similar talent in themselves.

Additional texts to include in the Anansi folktale study:

Anansi Does The Impossible!: An Ashanti Tale retold by Verna Aardema.

The Pot of Wisdom: Ananse Stories by Adwoa Badoe and Baba Wagué Diakité.

Ananse and the Lizard: A West African Tale retold and illustrated by Pat Cummings.

Anansi and The Box of Stories (On My Own Folklore), adapted by Stephen Krensky.

In *The Barefoot Book of Tropical Tales (Barefoot Collection)*, retold by Raouf Mama, you can read "Anansi and the Guinea Bird," a tale from Antigua.

African Tales (One World, One Planet) by Gcina Mhlophe

Ananse and the Impossible Quest by Rachel Griffin

Ananse's Feast: An Ashanti Tale retold by Tololwa M. Molel.

Lesson Two:

Objective: The students will use shapes to make the characters from the story as they create their own pictures and patterns.

Materials List: Pre-cut geometric shapes in various colors, scissors, glue or glue sticks, stencils, and plain white paper

A motif is a decorative design or pattern. Show students how the illustrator used traditional African design motifs to create the pictures in the book. Have students identify the various geometric shapes and symbols they see. Provide students with cut-out geometric shapes or stencils to create their own pattern or picture. Then have students work in groups to identify the shapes and symbols the peers used in their pattern or artwork.

Activity Two: Papa Bois Stories

After gathering the students for the story, again use the Haitian storytelling strategy of Krik? Krak! - call and response:

Teacher calls out: Krik? - Do you want to hear a story?

Students respond: Krak! - Yes, we do!

Read *The Talking Mango Tree* by A.H. Benjamin

Synopsis: When Peacock discovers a delicious mango tree and wishes to enjoy eating one, to his amazement he is told by the tree that he must first sing. Similarly, Snake and Monkey are also told that they must perform an action if they too wish to eat a mango. Other animals in the wood receive the same information. Eventually, Papa Bois, who is the protector of the animals and the wood, hears this news and is furious. However, upon approaching the mango tree and sounding his horn, when the fruit falls and the leaves blow away, he and the animals discover to their surprise that the culprit is in fact a mongoose who was playing a joke. The story ends with the characters feasting upon the juicy mangoes.

Actions required by the tree to be performed by the animals:

Peacock, sing

Snake, stands on his head

monkey, acrobatics

parrot, dance ballet

wild pig, skip rope

dog, juggle sticks

lizard, recite poetry

ant, do a balancing act with his soldiers

Donkey didn't think he had talent

Bat, asked Why do trees talk

The Papa Bois arrived and refused to "do something" for the tree. Instead, his action was to use his horn to blow away the leaves and fruit in a mighty puff to reveal the mongoose.

Discuss the following questions with the students before, and after the story: What is a mango tree? Have you ever tasted mango, and did you know that they grow on trees? The animals in this story talk. How did the animals feel when they were asked to perform? What actions did they perform, and did they all earn a mango? How about Donkey and Bat? Make a chart with the students to track each animal and its action.

Lesson One:

Objective: The students will create a horn, like the one Papa Bois uses to help the animals.

Materials List: Map and globe, paper towel tubes, colored paper, glue or glue sticks, and markers

Lead a discussion to talk about how Papa Bois' horn was helpful. Ask: How does a tool like a horn give someone an advantage? Give each student a paper towel tube and have them create a horn they could use in the manner of Papa Bois. Take the tubes/horns outside to allow them to be like Papa Bois.

Lesson Two:

Objective: The students may perform the actions of one of the animals in the story.

Materials List: objects used by the animal for their actions or items the students choose for their performance

Using the action list the students created, let them choose one to perform as the animals did in the story. They may choose to perform with a partner or on their own. Some students may just want to say or tell the action.

Activity Three: Mama Wati Stories

After gathering the students for the story, again use the Haitian storytelling strategy of Krik? Krak! - call and response:

Teacher calls out: Krik? - Do you want to hear a story?

Students respond: Krak! - Yes, we do!

Read *Fatama and Mami Wata's Secret* by Marcelle Mateki Akita

Synopsis: Fatama lives with her family in Freetown, Sierra Leone. She is fascinated by stories about Mami Wata, a water goddess from African legend. The family decides to take a trip to the seashore on the coming Sunday, Fatima's favorite place. With her great imagination, she tries to discover what Mami Wata looks like

and where she can find her. She wonders if she is in puddles, in glasses of water, or the lake near her. She has heard that Mami Wata has long hair and wears beautiful beads. Throughout the story, she asks her mother and father what they know about Mami Wata. When the family finally goes on a trip to the beach, Fatama prepares to meet this famous water spirit. She is disappointed for most of the day and then makes a wish for the goddess to just show her eyes to Fatama. As she walks to the water's edge, there is a sudden movement and Fatama sees two beautiful green eyes looking up at her from the water. Mami Wata says to keep their meeting a secret, which Fatama agrees to do. She heads home with her family, happy that her wish had come true and happily keeping the secret of seeing Mami Wata's eyes.

Lesson One:

Objective: The students will use the information from the story to create a picture of Mami Wata.

Materials List: Map and globe, drawing paper, colored pencils, markers, crayons, sketching pens

Ask what Fatama's wish was throughout the story (to see Mami Wata). Discuss why nobody can describe exactly what she looks like but just what they have heard about her. Have the students draw their version of what they think Mami Wata might look like. They can think about the characteristics mentioned in the story: long hair, colorful beads, a human body with a fishtail like a mermaid, and chalk-colored skin. Students can share their work and explain their designs to the class or in small groups.

Lesson Two:

Objective: The students will design a colorful bead and shell necklace that Mami Wata may wear.

Materials List: shells, beads, string, yarn, and ribbon

Students will use the materials to make a necklace they envision Mami Wata wearing as the protector of the sea.

Activity Four: Bacoo and Jumbie Stories

After gathering the students for the story, use the Haitian storytelling strategy of Krik? Krak! - call and response:

Teacher calls out: Krik? - Do you want to hear a story?

Students respond: Krak! - Yes, we do!

Read *Looking for a Jumbie* by Tracie Baptiste

Synopsis: "I'm looking for a jumbie. I'm going to find a scary one." This chant serves as an anchor throughout Naya's adventure to find jumbies. Naya is a young Black girl with her hair in a high ponytail and with large dark eyes and is determined to prove to her Mama that jumbies are real. Jumbies are described in an introductory letter to readers as creatures from Caribbean stories much like fairies or trolls who hide and play tricks on humans. As explained in the front matter, "Jumbies are often in scary stories told to frighten children into staying inside after dark, but jumbies can also be helpful." The author brings the retelling of Haitian-inspired folklore with the main character of Naya as a fierce, fearless, female who has adventures around her island to find the illusive jumbies. Along the way, Naya hears a voice whisper from the leaves and meets her

first creature who is invited to help Naya on her search. Each new creature she meets tells her jumbies aren't real, but maybe the voices she hears are in fact the jumbies and that they are surprisingly helpful.

Lesson One:

Objective: The students will recognize repeated language and phrases as they listen to the story.

Choral Reading. The sing-song nature of the refrain "We're looking for a jumbie. We're going to find a scary one" is a perfect invitation for the voices of young readers to join in during the read-aloud. This refrain is also an opportunity to incorporate physical movements or small gestures to make the story even more memorable and interactive. Invite students to help think of gestures that match the spirit of going on an adventure, looking for a jumbie, and finding a scary one. Use *Looking for a Jumbie* as a repeated read-aloud to invite more student participation with each reading.

Lesson Two:

Objective: The students will collaborate on a writing piece as a class and/or in small groups.

Materials List: large chart paper, student writing paper, small booklets

"We're Looking for a ____" Books. The refrain "We're looking for a jumbie. We're going to find a scary one" can be used for collaborative writing. Pair the two books *Looking for a Jumbie* with *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen. Invite students to create their own "We're looking for a ____ . We're going to find a __ one" stories, inspired by Baptiste and Rosen. This is an opportunity for shared writing to gather ideas from the class or interactive writing where share the pen with students as they compose ideas. Possibly extend this exercise into a partner or independent writing for students to create their own "We're looking for a ____" books that they later read or perform for classmates or families.

Activity Five: Comparing Lil'Mahn Bittyun and Rapunzel Stories

After gathering the students for the story, use the Haitian storytelling strategy of Krik? Krak! - call and response:

Teacher calls out: Krik? - Do you want to hear a story?

Students respond: Krak! - Yes, we do!

Read *The Girl Who Spun Gold* by Virginia Hamilton and

Create the following chart to track the information from each story.

Story	Characters	Setting	Problem	Solution
The Girl Who Spun Gold				
Rumpelstiltskin				

Lesson One:

Objective: The students will compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories. They will use drawing and writing to show their learning.

Materials: Map and globe, chart paper, markers, colored pencils, student copies of the graphic organizer

Lesson Two:

Objective: The students will compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories. They will use drawing and writing to show their learning.

Materials: Map and globe, chart paper, markers, colored pencils, student copies of the graphic organizer

Repeat this activity using the following stories:

Sugar Cane: A Caribbean Rapunzel by Patricia Storage

Rapunzel retold by Paul O. Zelinsky

Story	Characters	Setting	Problem	Solution
Sugar Cane: A Caribbean Rapunzel				
Rapunzel				

Bibliography

Akita, Marcelle. *Fatama and Mami Wata's Secret*. London: Rising Stars, 2020.

Baptiste, Tracey, and Amber Ren. *Looking for a Jumbie*. New York, USA: HarperCollins, 2022.

Benjamin, A H. *The Talking Mango Tree*. Cas, 2021.

"Bookstore: Trinbagonian #OwnVoices." Anasesem. Accessed June 30, 2022.
<http://www.anasesem.com/p/bookstore-trinidad-and-tobago.html>.

"Caribbean Books for Sale-the Best in Childrens' Books and Books for Adults." CaribbeanReads, April 28, 2021.
<https://www.caribbeanreads.com/>.

Comissiong, Lynette. *The Parrots and Papa Bois*. Macmillan Caribbean, 2002.

Elswit, Sharon. *The Caribbean Story Finder: A Guide to 438 Tales from 24 Nations and Territories, Listing Subjects and Sources*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017.

Hamilton, Virginia, Leo Dillon, and Diane Dillon. *The Girl Who Spun Gold*. New York, NY: Blue Sky Press, 2001.

Hill, Donald Routledge. *Caribbean Folklore: A Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007.

Kidworldcitizen, Pragmaticmom Says, Pragmaticmom, sunnyvale422 says, sunnyvale422, Kidworldcitizen Says, Katepickle Says, et al. "Anansi Stories: Trickster Spider from West Africa & the Caribbean." Kid World Citizen, January 27, 2018. <https://kidworldcitizen.org/anansi-stories-trickster-spider-west-africa-caribbean/>.

LyttleTwoTwo. "Jumbees of Guyana." Exemplore. Exemplore, August 22, 2012.

<https://exemphlore.com/paranormal/Jumbies-of-Guyana>.

McDermott, Gerald. *Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti*. New York: Square Fish, 2011.

Rafael, Ocasio. *Folk Stories from the Hills of Puerto Rico*. Rutgers University Press, 2021.

Shearer, Wendy. *African and Caribbean Folktales, Myths and Legends*. London: Scholastic, 2021.

Storace, Patricia. *Sugar Cane: A Caribbean Rapunzel*. LITTLE, BROWN, 2020.

The Diversity Story. "Caribbean Folklore." The Diversity Story, June 20, 2021.

<https://www.thediversitystory.org/post/caribbean-folklore>.

Zelinsky, Paul O. *Rumpelstiltskin*. New York: Puffin Books, 1997.

Zelinsky, Paul O., and Jacob Grimm. *Rapunzel*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, n.d.

Appendix - Implementing District Standards

CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RL. K.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

Students will know the Anansi, Papa Bois, Mami Wata, Boco, and Lil'Mahn characters and understand they are from stories told both in Africa and the Caribbean.

CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RL. K.6

With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

The students will understand that these stories were developed by storytellers over many years. The books that tell these stories are examples of the retelling of a well-known story and each time the story is retold, it may have slight differences and changes.

CCSS.ELA - LITERACY.RL. K.9

With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

Students will compare two familiar stories by the Grimm Brothers with two Caribbean versions with similar characters and experiences. *The Girl Who Spun Gold* compares closely with the story of *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Sugar Cane: A Caribbean Rapunzel* with the Grimm's character and storyline.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.2

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Students will be completing graphic organizers as they about writing specific information they learned by listening to the Caribbean and Grimm versions of a similar folktale.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.3

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, talk about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Students will participate in several writing activities in response to the story “Looking for a Jumbie.” This includes collaborative writing, interactive writing, partner writing, and independent writing.

Endnotes

¹ Kidworldcitizen, Pragmaticmom Says, Pragmaticmom, sunnyvale422 says, sunnyvale422, Kidworldcitizen Says, Katepickle Says, et al. “Anansi Stories: Trickster Spider from West Africa & the Caribbean.” Kid World Citizen, January 27, 2018. <https://kidworldcitizen.org/anansi-stories-trickster-spider-west-africa-caribbean/>.

² “Caribbean Books for Sale-the Best in Childrens' Books and Books for Adults.” CaribbeanReads, April 28, 2021. <https://www.caribbeanreads.com/>.

³ The Diversity Story. “Caribbean Folklore.” The Diversity Story, June 20, 2021. <https://www.thediversitystory.org/post/caribbean-folklore>.

⁴ LyttleTwoTwo. “Jumbees of Guyana.” Exemplore. Exemplore, August 22, 2012. <https://exemplore.com/paranormal/jumbies-of-Guyana>.

⁵ “Krik-Krak! · Visit Haiti.” Visit Haiti, February 26, 2021. <https://visithaiti.com/art-culture/krik-krak>

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2022 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>