



Folklore in the Oral Tradition, Fairytales, Fables and Folk-legend

Curriculum Unit 84.04.01
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Introduction

My intention is to give students an overview of works from various cultures considered to be in the oral tradition, with a special focus on American oral tradition. We will seek out themes and symbols recurring throughout the network and explore various interpretations. Commonality and divergence of theme and symbol will be discussed. The various motivations for story telling warrant class discussion or investigation. Much emphasis would be on basic skills like recalling sequence of events, separating main ideas from details, recognizing fact from opinion, summarizing, outlining and note-taking. There is also a lot of substance in the tales and legends which allows for making comparisons and contrasts, tracing patterns and motifs, translating imagery, relating to a larger frame of reference, making inferences, recognizing cause and effect relationships, determining significance and last but not least expressing individual interpretation. I have not recited this litany of skills with the presumption that I can touch on each and everyone here, but rather to suggest the potential source of wealth for skill development in folklore.

The approach could be multimodal, using literature, recordings, drawing and acting. Students could also fashion tales of their own, purely as an exercise. The tales which the students concoct would be based upon a folk model, but could not be considered the same as the model itself, as this small study of folklore will reveal.

Definition of Oral Tradition and Folklore

As I understand it an acceptable definition of stories in the oral tradition are those which the people formulate, pick up, and carry along as part of their cultural freight. These stories are told habitually by the people. Folklore is said to be in the oral tradition. Dundes states that the most common criterion for a definition of folklore is its means of transmission that is, orally. He clarifies however that materials other than folklore are also orally conveyed. Therefore oral transmission itself is not sufficient to distinguish folklore from non-folklore. On the other hand, if a story is transmitted only in print and had never been in oral tradition, it would be considered a "literary production based upon a folk model, but this is not the same as the folk model itself."

“The term ‘folk’ can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is—it could be a common occupation, language, or religion—but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own.”¹

Folklore, according to Dundes and others, includes forms from major to minor such as epics, myths, legends, fairytales, fables, proverbs, riddles, songs, jokes, insults, and toasts to nursery rhymes. Street vendors cries and prayers can also be added to the list. Games, symbols, quilt designs, and festivals are, interestingly, non-verbal forms of folklore.

Folklore is also common to all people.

“No group of people, however remote or however simple their technology, has ever been discovered which does not employ some form of folklore. Because of this and because the same tales and proverbs may be known to both, folklore is a bridge between literate and non-literate societies.”²

The Origins of Folklore

As to the origins of folklore, Bascom theorizes that any story must be invented by some individual, and it is either accepted or rejected by the group because it does or does not fill a need. Acceptance or rejection of an item is also contingent on its compatibility “with the accepted patterns and traditions of folklore of a culture as a whole.”³ In the course of retelling a story, experience shows that changes occur, and the piece is again subject to acceptance or rejection. “As this process continues, each new invention is adapted gradually to the needs of the society and to the pre-existing culture patterns, which may themselves be modified somewhat to conform to the new invention.”⁴ Accordingly, folklore spreads from one society to another. It is then again subject to acceptance, rejection, or adaptation.

Bascom says that every culture, including our own American culture, depends in part on folklore for the maintenance of its continuity. This is evidenced by the fact that much of our communion is composed of repetition of familiar ideas expressed in a familiar form. New ways of expressing ideas which have what Adams calls an “artistic and structured” form, and are passed on from person to person, may become types of folklore.

The Functions of Folklore

Both Adams and Dundes discuss “functions of folklore” in terms of what I originally considered motivations for story telling. Perhaps function is a more accurate term than motivation since motivation suggests a premeditated intention. Adams names these functions: validation, maintaining conformity or control, escape, and education. Folklore, they suggest, validates certain aspects of culture and justifies its rituals and institutions. There is the “explanatory tale” or a moral animal tale, myth or legend to “validate doubted pattern or to warn of subsequent consequences if necessary when accepted practices are violated.” Folklore also provides rationalizations when institutions and conventions are challenged.

The second function which Adams calls “integration” is group cohesion and group feeling. Dundes terms this “maintaining conformity”. Dundes’ notion emphasizes the way folklore acts as a controlling factor. Consider how folklore can be used to express social approval of those who conform. On the other hand, Adams says that the telling of legends can act as an “icebreaker” to let outsiders into the group or bring the group closer together.

Adams labels a third function of folklore “compensation” for something lacking in reality, and he suggests that telling the tale may serve as an ego building device for the teller. Bascom looks at the same function from a slightly different slant and calls it “escape” in fantasy from a) frustrations and repressions and b) “Geographical environment and biological limitations”.

Many agree that a fourth function of folklore is to educate. Folklore can carry along and teach the history of a people as well as its cultural norms diligence, respect, perseverance, etc. Dangers and how to avoid them may be pointed out. The most fascinating tales are legends which attempt to teach why things are found as they are, for example, why the elephant has a long nose or the bear a short tail. While no one labels entertainment as a function of folklore, it seems that one of the primary purposes served when a story is told is to interest, and provide fun or excitement.

The functions of legends are not fixed and may change as the context changes. According to Adams the context includes the following: 1. When and where the tale was told. 2. Events which took place before the narration began. 3. Was the legend told verbatim or not. 4. Gestures and facial expression. 5. The relationship of the narrator and the audience. 6. The amount and type of audience reaction and participation. 7. The age, occupation, ethnic background, etc. of both teller and audience. For example, when and where the tale was told, or to whom could change whether the tale acted as an educating or controlling factor. These factors provide a good source of investigation and class discussion.

Three Types of Oral Folklore and Suggested Objectives for Each

Rather than making an attempt at classification of types of folklore which will stultify this study or tack arbitrary labels on the various works in the oral tradition, my objective is only to clarify, by pointing out, distinguishing features of each. Nomenclature is not critical here. In this case, I have chosen Adam’s terms “folktale”, and “folk-legend”. These terms serve only as guidelines. The student must be made aware that these are not fixed terms in which to pocket each story, and that there will be interesting cross overs and cunningly intricate ambiguities which is what makes the study worthwhile. With this preface in mind, to facilitate lesson planning, I will attempt to trace features which tend to make some stories fall into one unique group or another because of their nature.

The Folktale

Adams says that the two main distinguishing features of what he calls the folktale are “...its relative stability as to form and its complete lack of any claim that what is portrayed in the tale actually happened.”⁵ The folktale is then divided into two classes based on form. Those with more complex form are called fairy tales, “Marchen”, or wonder tales. The more simple in form are animal tales, jokes, anecdotes, and formula tales. It

is on the fairy tales and animal tales or fables that I intend to place my emphasis, as a sampling of the folktale.

Many students whom I have encountered have little knowledge of the fairy tales that many of us grew up on. Therefore it would be a valuable experience for them to be acquainted with at least Grimm's and Andersen's *Fairy Tales*. As to form, the student should be made aware that while it is relatively stable "...the folktale is not a static phenomena, but the product of an individual tradition bearer's constant reworking of it as he lives in the social group." ⁶ As to content the student should know that the folklore represents "...what the storyteller feels to be a true reflection of real relationships between groups in a class, ethnic, racial or sex basis." ⁷

However, acquaintance with the form and content of the tales would be insufficient. Some transferable skill must be acquired in order to make the most of the tales for classroom purposes. The fairy tale appeals to the imagination. So stimulation of the imagination could be an objective. Testing to see the degree to which students' imaginations have been stimulated can be through having some sketch pictures to illustrate the stories and having others, so inclined, act out the stories. Drawing and acting would be motivators for practicing more hard core basic skills like concentration, reading (since this is the mode in which oral stories have been preserved), memorizing, reciting (an opportunity to enact oral tradition first hand). The language in the tales is simple and so would be useful with lower level readers, but the high interest level and appeal to the imagination make them applicable to audiences of all levels of reading ability.

Aesop's Fables which falls into the category of simple animal folktales offers the same opportunity for high interest, easy, fun reading and all the advantages for developing skills from most basic to more sophisticated. While I believe that art can be appreciated for art's sake and likewise stories for their own sake, my basic objective is to use these works as a medium for developing specific basic skills. I hope that an exercise to stimulate thought such as presenting a moral a la Aesop, and having the students concoct a story to illustrate it would be challenging rather than contrived. Such an exercise can be done orally or in writing. Care must be taken, however, that a purely workbook mentality is not developed by the exercise which can distract from the spirit in which the original stories were intended. The tales and fables can be read, told and discussed for their own sake, and also used as mediums for learning and practicing other skills already mentioned.

The Folk-legend

The area of folk-legend is what Adams defines as "...a traditional, oral expression which tells of extraordinary events in the lives of everyday people, told as if it were an historical account." ⁸ Like the folktale, folk-legend is passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. The folk-legend tends to be ampler and more circumstantial than the folktale. The setting is very real, giving detail and local specifics to present an "aura of validity". Several authorities have compared the folktale to the novel or short story and the folk-legend to a newspaper story. The folk-legend can be conversational in tone with "give and take" between the teller and the audience. The legend is told with the assumption that the story really happened and the audience reaction revolves in part around the credibility or incredibility of the story. For instance, "The Song of Billy the Kid" begins with the words "I'll sing you a *true* song of Billy the Kid." This is again in contrast to the fairy tale and fable which are obviously metaphorical.

I have specifically chosen American folk-legend for sample lessons because it is ours and because of practical

limitations. It would also be good to point out to students that “In a sense, the United States is the world’s greatest meeting ground of foreign folklores and an ideal arena for observing the survival of old traditions and the assimilation of new ones.”⁹ Brunvand has divided American legends themselves into four categories. 1. Religious legends which are “traditional stories about miracles, revelations, answers to prayers and marvelous icons.”¹⁰ 2. Supernatural legends which tell of vampires, werewolves, trolls, fairies, little people, zombies and ghost stories, many of which are European in origin. 3. Personal legends about such figures as Davy Crockett, Johnny Appleseed, Billy the Kid, and Paul Bunyan (whom Brunvand refers to as “fakelore”). 4. Local legends are “...those closely associated with specific places either with their names, their geographic features, or their histories.”¹¹

All four categories of American legend are described here as a point of interest and information, and also to give some kind of complete shape to the area of legend. For the teacher, awareness of various categories makes lesson planning less haphazard. For the students at least an introduction to several categories offers options for study on their own. If there is great class response, and the teacher chooses, he or she might set up groups to survey these four areas of American legend for comparative study. Setting up groups for each area would cut down on time and allow the students to share their finding in a spontaneous but orderly fashion. Because of limitations of time and space however, this study must confine itself to samples of personal legends and local legends.

When the tales and ballads of a local hero spread across the country and enlarged the circle of his admirers he became a legendary hero. Brunvand says:

“The typical hero of genuine indigenous oral tradition in the United States is not the brawling frontier trailblazer or the giant mythical laborer, but rather the local tall-tale specialist who has gathered a repertoire of traditional exaggerations and attached them to his own career.”¹²

The pre-civil war Davy Crockett fits this description since this backwoods brawler and boaster is best remembered for the tales he told. Even though the tall-tale specialist will be given his due in this study, I would be remiss not to include some “bad men” and a giant mythical laborer or two. The legends of the bad men Billy the Kid, and Stackalee, the “miracle men” Paul Bunyan and John Henry, and the pioneer hero Johnny Appleseed are very representative of personal legends and offer a good starting place. These rich characters can be presented as vignettes in discussion form. Samples of stories, poems, and songs can be used for basic skill development with lower skill level groups. Analysis of the language and structure of the work, along with speculation of folk-legend’s role in the emerging American culture can be added for higher skill level groups. A further list of “bad men” and heroes such as Wild Bill Hickock, Jessie James, Sam Bass, Roy Bean, Buffalo Bill and Casey Jones will be given for independent study. It is sad to say that I have not found as many legendary women listed in American folklegend anthologies, but that could be included as an independent pursuit for interested students as well. The category of “local legends” is well represented by Charles Chesnutt’s *Conjure Woman*. Here plantation stories are told in “a tale within a tale” format. The frame narrator is a white Northerner who settles in the South and meets Uncle Julius, an exslave, who tells him pre-War tales of conjuration. In the introduction to the book, Robert Farnsworth quotes Chesnutt’s daughter who says that the point of view of these tales does not gloss over the tragedy of slavery and is very different from the plantation stories of George W. Cable, Harry Stillwell Edwards and others. Indeed, it is different, and Chesnutt’s *Conjure Woman* could easily be used in its entirety or in part in the classroom. Chesnutt’s northerner speaks purely in mainstream English, and Uncle Julius tells his tales in a black North Carolina dialect. The fluency with which Chesnutt weaves in and out of the two dialects is a lesson in itself. The difficulty of understanding the dialect can be overcome by first presenting some of the material orally, and next reading with the class looking on.

Individual students could be assigned passages to prepare at home and present the next day to the class.

Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*, representative of a mixed bag of local folk-legend and folktale, could also be presented in its entirety or in part depending on the reading level and absorption capacity of the class. In it, Miss Hurston tells of her experiences upon returning home to Eatonville, Florida to collect "Negro folklore." While she tells of her experiences we also acquire the folklore. The book's characters deliciously lead us into the folktales. This is another case of "tales within tales" which will easily entice and draw in the students as well. The story of Miss Hurston's return home to gather these works is a ready made anticipatory set for getting students' attention geared toward the heart of the story the legend.

Themes in Folklore

For a student to want to participate in any work, some meaning must be brought to it, or found in it if any retention is to occur. Folklore is rich in themes and symbols which can stimulate the resources a student needs to cope with his difficult inner problems. The fairytales, fables and folklegend each provide their own kind of meaning.

Bruno Bettelheim applies the psycho analytic model of the human personality to the fairytale. He says that "...fairy tales carry important messages to the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious mind, on whatever level each is functioning at the time." The form and structure of fairy tales, he continues, "suggest images to the child by which he can structure his daydreams and with them give better direction to this life."

¹³ While fairytales are excellent for young children because they present positive solutions to difficult problems, they also give form to what Bettelheim calls his formless, nameless anxieties, and his chaotic, angry, and sometimes violent fantasies. It is specifically this underside of fairytales that I believe will appeal to adolescents.

Fairytales show that struggles in life are unavoidable but that if one perseveres against unexpected and unjust hardships, he can be a winner. Fairytale characters are unusually very clearly drawn and are typical rather than unique. They are not ambivalent as we are in reality, but either all good or all bad, all beautiful or all ugly, all stupid or all smart. It is this polarization which makes identifying with the good or bad, smart or stupid qualities more clear for the child. The fairytale hero is also often in isolation or forced out like Hansel and Gretel. It is not solely on the happy ending which Bettelheim advises us to concentrate, but also on the process of finding his way, step by step, through unknown, terrifying circumstances which will lead to a successful end.

The variety of motifs which appear in the fairytales have meaning for children of all ages. "The central motif of 'Snow White' is the pubertal girl's surpassing in every way the evil stepmother who, out of jealousy, denies her an independent existence—symbolically represented by the stepmother's trying to see Snow White destroyed." ¹⁴ Rapunsel is another preadolescent girl whose jealous mother tries to prevent her from gaining independence. Another motif of this story was that Rapunsel was able to use her own personal resource, her hair, to escape her predicament. This motif might have special meaning at an age when children need to find in their own bodies a source of security.

The theme of a giant in conflict with an ordinary person appears in Grimm's "The Spirit in a Bottle." The hero must then use his wits and cunning to extricate himself from a dangerous situation. Here there is also the

theme of reason winning over emotions. Then the hero is not released on his first try. Efforts must be continued before success is achieved. Bettelheim suggests that giants are often parental figures and that children can thus project and work out family conflicts and anxieties. He says that the young child should not be confronted with direct interpretations of the symbols because his conscious is not yet ready to receive them. It seems, however, that by age thirteen or fourteen students would be ready to translate some of the images, consciously, with delicate and respectful guidance.

Other symbols in the fairytale world include animals which are either all devouring or all-helpful. The wolf, ferocity and maliciousness incarnate, is typical. Bettelheim theorizes that "Both dangerous and helpful animals stand for our animal nature, our instinctual drives." ¹⁵ While certain stories of brothers or sisters may depict sibling rivalry, others such as Grimm's "The Queen Bee" show characters which may be thought of as representing the "disparate natures of id, ego and superego; and the main message is that these be integrated for human happiness." ¹⁶ Many tales weave the motif that love transforms even ugly things into that which is beautiful, as when the beast or frog which is loved turns into a prince. The theme of the struggle to achieve maturity is particularly geared to the adolescent and is well depicted in "The Three Feathers" and "Little Red Cap." Although the fairytale may begin with a student's psychological state of mind, according to Bettelheim, it never starts with his physical reality. There is a "Once upon a time...", "In a certain country...", vagueness in the beginning of fairytales which suggests that we are leaving ordinary reality. Old castles, dark caves, deep woods reveal that which is normally hidden, while "long ago" implies archaic, primordial events.

The fable which presents a moral truth, has much less hidden meaning, with little left to the imagination. Human motives and acts are attributed to animals and tell what one ought to do. According to the Junior Library Edition of *Aesop's Fables*, the fable was used for political purposes in Greece when free speech was dangerous. Perhaps this is why fables appear to demand, threaten or be moralistic. In this case they present an excellent contrast to the fairytale.

The heroes of the personal legends are very powerful folk symbols in themselves. They personify the qualities that we would most like to have or that we most admire in ourselves. The great Greek and Roman heroes received their powers from the gods, but American heroes must depend on their own resourcefulness. Every walk of life and every occupation has its typical folk heroes from loggers, sailors, cowboys, miners and railroaders to jet pilots, journalists and even academics (consider the gentle, absentminded professor). Botkin says that Americans create or choose heroes in their own image.

The three main themes or motifs which run through the personal legends feature "the poor boy who makes good, the good boy gone wrong and the kind that is too good or bad to be true." Botkin paints a composite picture of the American hero as a

"...plain tough, practical fellow, equally good at a bargain or a fight, a star performer on the job and a hell-raiser off it, and something of a salesman and a showman, with a flair for prodigious stories, jokes and stunts and a general capacity for putting himself over." ¹⁷

In the local legends, themes and symbols are present but not so obvious as in the fairytales and personal legends. Chesnutt put together *The Conjure Woman* tales to educate a white audience, as his granddaughter says, without forcing a direct emotional confrontation. Chesnutt tells of the impact of slavery on blacks and illuminates its dehumanizing aspects by the various animal and vegetable forms that the characters must take, while under a spell, to achieve or avoid an end. The horrible treatment or trials the characters face after such metamorphosis symbolizes their lack of control over their predicament, and their attempts to come to

grips with it. In one case Chesnutt turns the tables, and Julius tells of a white slave owner who was transformed into a slave and subjected to some of his own treatment. Here the lesson is quite clear. Julius, it appears, tells these stories to gain an end but also to preserve a system.

In *Mules and Men*, Hurston does not simply tell the tale but places them in the “world of jook joints, lying contests, and tall-tale sessions that make up the drama of the folk life of black people in the rural South.”¹⁸ The story around the tales exposes the prejudices, love affairs and jealousies of the people who tell them. The reader is not excluded from the actual gathering of the folk material, and this is important for setting a better mood in which to appreciate the themes.

The book is divided into two parts, Folk Tales and Hoodoo. The Folk Tale themes go from “flood” to “freedom”, and include tricks, triumphs, defeats and explanations such as “Why Negroes are Black” and “De Reason Niggers Is Working So Hard.” Many of these tales read like the fairytales with themes of rites of passage, overcoming difficult situations, and motifs which include symbols such as helpful, harmful, cunning or wisecracking animals, god and the devil, to be sure. There is much here for interpretation and for the unconscious to be brought to the fore as with the fairytales.

The Hoodoo Tales focus on sorcery. Hoodoo is a blend of Christianity and African fetishism. The major concerns or themes in this section center around health, love, economic success and power over others. Charms, potions or amulets are readily prescribed to ensure a desired course of action. The hoodoo tales offer an excellent comparison to Chesnutt’s conjure tales.

About the Strategies Used in the Sample Lessons

The sample lessons which follow are primarily geared toward showing a variety of approaches to developing basic skills using folklore as a medium. It is assumed that every teacher has his/her own bag of tricks and will adapt and adjust the samples to suit his/her own needs and students’. These plans have been written for ninth graders of average intelligence, whose skills range from being on par to seriously deficient. Commonly, these students are all in the same class so I have designed the exercises and questions to suit the range of needs within the group. Some exercises and especially the essay questions are more difficult than others. I have indicated degree of estimated difficulty by giving the exercises and questions one (basic), two or three (more advanced) stars. However the teacher may like the “idea” of one of the easier exercises, but may need to “beef it up” for a faster group or pare down one of the more difficult essay questions.

In the case of note-taking, for example, the speed, complexity and topics of the notes as well as *when* they are presented are flexible. Rather than just giving background on those who gathered the folklore, notes can be given on the origins, functions and types of folklore somewhat like what was presented in this study. I have suggested giving some background notes at the beginning of each subunit to give the students a feeling of security and “groundedness” about what they will be approaching. However, I do not want to remove all the mystery and adventure and bury the students in notes. Perhaps more weighty note-taking exercises could be done at the end of the unit for reinforcement and consolidation of ideas after the students have had time to draw some of their own conclusions through discussion and essay and after they have had time for reflection. Evaluation of the note-taking could be done by on the spot questioning, for immediate and specific feedback, or by designing a test for the notes.

It has been my experience that most students do best when presented with a model of what is to be produced or by the teacher modeling the process. I have presented a model of an entire sentence outline for "Little Red Cap" to save the teacher time and effort. This outline can be given as a whole, in part, or shown as a process on the board. While I have suggested that I want the students to have a feeling of "groundedness" I do not want to remove the possibility of flight. Therefore I trust that the teacher will choose the most inspiring and stimulating process as well as materials.

Summary

I have tried to present a unit of folklore in the oral tradition which will use a sampler of fairytales or "marchen", fables, and folklegend. Grimm's and Andersen's tales would probably be most suited and most useful if presented to students in part. *Aesop's Fables* have the same type of flexibility. The stories, songs and poems of folk-heroes can also be selected from anthologies. Chesnutt's *Conjure Woman* and Hurston's *Mules and Men* are highly manageable texts to use in entirety, but if necessary, the nature of the stories while best as a connected series, allows the high school teacher, under pressure of time, to use selections from each.

Notes

¹ Alan Dundes, ed., *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 1-2.

² William R. Bascom "Folklore and Anthropology," in *The Study of Folklore*, p. 26.

³ Bascom, p. 29.

⁴ Bascom, p. 29.

⁵ Robert G. Adams, ed., *Introduction to Folklore* (Columbus, Ohio: Collegiate Pub., 1973), p. 27.

⁶ Adams, p. 37.

⁷ Adams, p. 48.

⁸ Adams, p. 11.

⁹ Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1978) p. 32.

¹⁰ Brunvand, p. 35.

¹¹ Brunvand, p. 116.

¹² Brunvand, p. 120.

¹³ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, Inc., 1977) pp. 6-7.

¹⁴ Bettelheim, p. 16.

¹⁵ Bettelheim, p. 76.

¹⁶ Bettelheim, p. 78.

¹⁷ B. A. Botkin, *A Treasury of American Folklore* (New York: Crown Pub., 1948), p. 2.

¹⁸ Alice Walker, ed., *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1979), p. 14.

Sample Lessons

Fairy Tales (2 weeks)

Warm-up Activities

Ask for a show of hands just to see how many students recall fairy tales told or read to them as very young children. (An initial show of hands gets as many students as possible involved without embarrassing commitment on the part of any one student.) Then ask for a volunteer among those who raised hands to recount a story as he or she recalls it. If no one volunteers then either read or play recordings (see bibliography for suggested recordings of Fairy Tales) of preselected, very famous tales like “Tom Thumb” or “Ash Maiden” otherwise known as “Cinderella”. Lead this to a discussion of various versions and how this can happen to stories, which are supposed to be constant in form, when they are passed on orally or commercially popularized. (Some of Grimm’s and Andersen’s tales were changed to make them more commercial or culturally palatable. Please try to obtain original versions for the readings.)

Exercises

** 1. *Objective* : Students will be able to recount background of Grimm and Andersen.

Exercise : Have students take notes while giving background on both Grimm and Andersen.

Monitor as students take notes. Check on accuracy of notes by asking spot check questions.

Adjust and repeat if necessary.

** 2. *Objective* : Students will develop imagination, concentration and memory.

Exercise : Divide the class into three groups those who enjoy drawing, those inclined toward acting, and those who prefer recitation. Have each group read different selected stories both from Grimm and Andersen. Each group might do two to six stories from each depending on students’ capacity. a) The first group would draw illustrations of each story read for class display. b) The second group could be organized to do a simple mime presentation of stories which the teacher deems to be particularly geared toward quick improvisation, for example, “Little Red Cap”. One student would act as narrator and four others could take the parts of “Little Red”, the wolf, the grandmother and the woodsman. Props are simple or optional. c) The third group might be challenged by memorization of part of all of the shorter stories to be presented for the class.

Worksheet

** Objective : The student will be able to write a sentence outline.

Directions : Outline the main events of two stories you read as you see "Little Red Cap" outlined here. Include important details, and minor details. (The teacher may have to demonstrate the process of outlining with more than one story. Monitor and adjust as is necessary.)

"Little Red Cap" (Sentence Outline)

- I. Everyone loved a certain little girl.
 - A. Grandmother gave her a red velvet cap.
 - B. The girl wore the cap all the time.
 - C. Everyone called her Little Red Cap.
- II. Red Cap's grandmother gets sick.
 - A. Red Cap's mother gives her cake and wine to take to grandma.
 - B. Red Cap's mother tells her to behave properly.
 - 1. Don't leave the path.
 - 2. Don't forget to say good morning.
 - 3. Don't go looking in all the corners.
 - C. Red Cap promises to do everything right.
- III. Red Cap meets the wolf.
 - A. Red Cap is not afraid.
 - B. She tells him all her business.
 - C. The wolf thinks Red Cap would be a tasty dish.
 - D. He talks her into going off the path to pick flowers.
- IV. While Red goes deeper into the wood the wolf goes to grandma's.
 - A. He pretends to be Red.
 - B. He gobbles up grandma.

- C. He takes her place in bed.
When Red gets
- V. enough flowers she remembers grandma.
- A. Grandma's door is open.
1. Red is frightened.
 2. Grandma looks strange.
 - a. She has big ears.
 - b. She has big eyes.
 - c. She has big hands.
 - d. She has a big mouth.
- B. The wolf gobbles up poor Red.
A hunter passing by
- VI. hears the waif snoring.
- A. He was about to shoot the wolf.
1. He thinks the wolf might have swallowed grandma.
 2. He cuts the wolf's belly and finds Red.
 - a. Red said she was afraid inside the wolf.
 - b. Grandma comes out too.
- B. They filled the wolf's belly with stones.
1. He wanted to run.
 2. Instead he fell down dead.
- C. All three were happy.
1. The hunter got the skin.
 2. Grandmother got well.
 3. Red Cap decided never again to leave the path.

Discussion or Essay Questions

** 1. *Objective:* The student will recognize the theme of unavoidable conflict.

Question: Fairytales show that struggles in life are unavoidable, but that if one perseveres against unexpected hardships and unjust odds he or she can survive and even win. Discuss a fairytale in which the hero emerges victorious. Describe the steps he/she takes and the circumstances or helpers he/she encounters to achieve that end.

** 2. *Objective :* The student will recognize the dual nature theme.

Question : Same fairytale tell of two brothers or sisters who are completely different from one another. Discuss a tale in which the two act in completely different ways. How are they different? What is the result of their actions?

** 3. *Objective :* The student will recognize the isolation theme.

Question : Sometimes a person is shunned by parents or others and may feel isolated or may feel overpowered by them. Discuss a tale in which either or both of these conditions occur. Describe how the hero resolves his or her problem.

*** 4. *Objective:* The student will recognize the motif of helpful or hindering forces apart from, or within oneself.

Question: Very often animals appear in fairytales which are either very threatening or very helpful. Contrast two such animals either in the same or different tales and tell how they either helped or hindered the hero.

** 5. *Objective :* The student will express his opinion about the setting of fairytales.

Question : Many tales begin “Once upon a time or “Long ago” and the setting is often in old castles, deep woods, or locked rooms. Why do you think this is so?

Fables (1 week)

Warmup Activities

Cite a few maxims like “Honesty is the best policy”, “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you”, “Do not count your chickens before they are hatched”, etc. (all of which can be found in Aesop’s). Engage students in a conversation of where they heard them, who said them, possible interpretations and general applications. Tell that there are stories which illustrate such maxims. Read two or three to the class or have a class member read to the group.

Exercises

** 1. *Objective* : Students will be able to describe the circumstances in which Aesop told his tales and to what uses he put them.

Exercise : Students can have another opportunity to practice note taking. (If possible use a globe or map to show the area of Asia Minor). Tell of Aesop's background as a slave of Iadmon on the island of Samos and his rise to ambassador to the small Greek states for Croesus, the last of the kings of Lydia in Asia Minor, using his tales to gain acclaim and power. As with the background on Fairytales, monitor and adjust rate and complexity with which notes are given after checking for understanding by using two simple techniques suggested by Madeline Hunter (principal, University Elementary School, University of California, and author) a) Sampling, that is, posing content questions to the entire group and/or b) Calling for signaled responses which involves getting answers from every group member and signaling "agree", "disagree" or "not sure". Teachers can develop their own signal system, for example, thumbs up or thumbs down, palm forward or backward, etc.

*** 2. *Objective* : The student will be able to illustrate an abstract idea with a literal or concrete example.

Exercise : a) Choose one of Aesop's Fables for the students to read. b) Discuss the fable and the moral. c) Have the students make up their own story to illustrate the moral. d) With original sketches by the students, their own stories, in the fable model, would be excellent for class display.

*Worksheet

Objective: Students will demonstrate awareness of cause and effect relationships.

For every action there is a reaction in many cases. In Aesop's fable, "The Horse and the Stag" there are certain actions taken by the horse which result in certain consequences. These actions and their results are listed below.

- a. A quarrel arose between the horse and the stag, *and as a result the horse asked the hunter to take his side in the feud* .
- b. The horse agreed to be bridled and saddled *and as a result the man was able to ride him* .
- c. The hunter and the horse joined forces, *and as a result the stag was put to flight* .
- d. The horse gave up his freedom to suit his purpose for a short time *and as a result the man had trapped him forever* .

Now do the same with "The Farmer and the Nightingale"

- a. The nightingale sang so beautifully *and as a result*
- b. The nightingale said he would die in a cage *and as a result*
- c. The nightingale promises the farmer three great truths *and as a result*
- d. The nightingale sang some happy notes, told the truths , *and flew away, and as a result*

Discussion or Essay Questions

* 1. *Objective* : The student will recognize and define the animals' human qualities.

Question : Describe how the animals in two fables you read act like people.

** 2. *Objective* : The student will explain a moral tale.

Question : The fable presents a moral truth or lesson. Explain your favorite fable in terms of the moral.

*** 3. *Objective*: The student will compare and contrast fairytale and fable.

Question: Fables and fairytales both seem to teach some kind of lesson. What are other likenesses and differences between them.

Personal Legends (2 weeks)

Warmup Activities

1. If possible bring in any props obtainable—e.g. a cowboy hat, spurs, toy gun and holster (must not be “corny” , and must be used with respect to the situation) “wanted” posters, old newspapers, pictures, etc.—to simulate discussion of heroes and badmen of legendary fame—and/or

2. Play records of Stackales (“Stagger Lee”, sung by Lloyd Price “45” obtainable at Meryl’s on Chapel Street) and “Song of Billy the Kid.” (LP recording “Billy the Kid in Song and Story” sung by Oscar Brand). Lyrics for these ballads can be found in *A Treasury of American Folklore* edited by B. A. Botkin. See bibliography for other suggested recordings.

Exercises

** 1. *Objective* : Students will be able to write a summary of the life of a legendary person.

Exercise : a) Present a one page sketch containing at least three or four paragraphs of the life of Davy Crockett. (Use a map to show the Tennessee area to enhance the reality behind the legend.)

b) Show students the process of summarizing by making a summary statement on the board for each of the paragraphs on the Davy Crockett sketch presented. Students themselves can be called upon to create the summary statements. The result will be a three to four sentence summary of Crockett’s life.

c) Give a list of the following (or for more zip place the names on small separate sheets of paper and have students pick from a can or box): Billy the kid, Stackalee, Paul Bunyan, John Henry, Johnny Appleseed or any other favorites.

d) Have students research in an encyclopedia, or any other source, the known events in the life of the character they chose and prepare a summary paragraph. Optional: Have students draw and label the section of the country in question.

*** 2. *Objective*: Students will be able to define and illustrate whether the character is a hero, a “badman”, a miracle man, a boaster or combination.

Exercise: a) Present a specific anecdotal story representative of the character of Davy Crockett.

b) Again practice summary with the students using the story.

c) Then show students how to pick out key phrases or sentences which are explicit in character portrayal either by the characters words or actions, or the narrative description. Write out summary character sketch on board.

d) Refer students to the booklist and have them research characters they summarized-practicing on their own, steps b and c.

e) Optional: Summaries and character sketches may be presented orally.

Discussion or Essay Questions

* 1. *Objective* : Students will recognize and define some qualities of the American hero.

Question : It has been said that great American heroes personify the qualities we most admire in ourselves. Which American hero do you most admire and why?

** 2. *Objective* : Students will trace cause and effect relationships in creating a legend.

Question : In personal legends we find three types of characters the poor boy who makes good, the good boy gone wrong, and the kind that is too good or bad to be true. Choose two of these and trace how they came to that end.

*** 3. *Objective* : Students will compare and contrast the fairytale and legend.

Question : Fairytales and legends both show how courage and cunning, balanced with the virtues of thrift and hard work lead the hero to success. They also both show how those with evil intentions or poor habits are unsuccessful and that crime does not pay. Compare and contrast the different way in which the fairytale and legend say the same thing in a different way. Refer to the themes, time, setting, and characters.

** 4. *Objective*: Students will discuss the form of fairytales and legend on an elementary level.

Question: Fairytales and legends are all said to be folklore in the oral tradition—that is they were passed on by word of mouth before they were written down. Discuss the changes you think each might have taken as they were being passed on.

Local Legends (1 or 2 weeks)

The Conjure Woman by Charles Chesnutt

Warmup Activities : Use a rabbit's foot, a small rag doll figure with pins in it, a charm of some sort, an old looking bottle with colored liquid in it, or any other items associated with superstition to engage students in a "believe it or not" discussion of conjuration, spells and superstition.

Exercises:

** 1. *Objective* : Students have more opportunity, to practice note-taking.

Exercise : Give background on Chesnutt. (May be taken from the introduction to *Conjure Woman*). Use a map to show the area of North Carolina. Monitor and adjust note-taking.

** 2. *Objective*: Students will be able to hear and practice flow and difference between mainstream English and North Carolina dialect.

Exercise: a) Either the teacher or a guest storyteller, who is at ease with such dialect, read a selection of *Conjure Woman* to the class. Note and discuss the differences between the mainstream and the dialect.

b) Assign one story (or several, depending on capacity of students) to prepare at home. Instruct them to practice reading the story aloud.

c) Prearrange for two to four willing students to present the stories the next day.

d) However, advise that any student might be called upon to attempt the oral reading in class to encourage real practice at home.

e) Have the students read aloud the following day.

Worksheet (Can be used for all stories)

Objective: Students will be able to recognize facts stated by Uncle Julius and resulting inferences he makes.

- I. List 5 important facts stated by Uncle Julius in "The Goophered Grapevine."

1. Aunt Peggy came to the vineyard and took some leaves, a grape-seed, a grape-hull, some dirt, etc...

2.

3.

4.

5.

- II. List 5 important inferences made by Uncle Julius regarding each fact listed above.

1. A child who ran away from the quarters one day, ate the scuppernongs(grapes), and died from the goopher (spell) Aunt Peggy put on the vineyard.

2.

3.

4.

5.

- III. Discuss the significance of these inferences
- IV. A. What is John's reaction at the end of the story?
B. What is Annie's reaction at the end of the story?
- V. In your opinion why did Uncle Julius tell this story?

Local Legends(1 or 2 weeks)

Mules and Men by Zora Neale Hurston

Warmup Activities: Ask if any students came from another state or lived in one place all their lives. Steer the discussion toward local customs, stories, etc. Tell about Hurston's background and return to Eatonville, Florida to investigate and record black folklore. Perhaps read an animal tale like "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox" (can be found in *A Treasury of American Folklore*).

Exercises:

* 1. *Objective*: Students will be able to recount the sequence of events in Miss Hurston's narrative account of her return home.

Exercise: a) Instruct the students to read a particular section and distinguish between Zora's story of the events that take place on her return home and the folk-tales which the people tell.

b) Have the students arrange the events of the main narrative in order (what happened first, second, etc) in writing.

** 2. *Objective* : Students will have a basis of comparison between the tales told by "Uncle Julius" in *The Conjure Woman* and the tales picked up by Miss Hurston in *Mules and Men*.

Exercise: a) Assign students to choose and prepare to read two stories each from *Mules and Men*.

b) Have actual readings on the following day.

c) Discuss with students the differences and like qualities they find between the Chesnutt and Hurston stories.

* 3. *Objective* : Students will be able to describe the news story elements of the legends.

Exercise : Have students identify and describe either orally or in writing the who, why, what, where and when elements of the tales.

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