



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1993 Volume II: Folktales

Folktales: Oral Traditions as a Basis for Instruction in our Schools

Guide for Curriculum Unit 93.02.09
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Keeping my classroom population in mind, and also keeping in mind that classification by type and motif leads to clear organization, classification seemed to be a good place to start organizing my unit. For my own classroom purposes, I divided my unit into four thematic areas which I call Tricksters Getting Tricked, Dreams Come True, Clever Animal Helpers, and Tales of Enchantment. The titles for each mini-unit come out of the stories chosen for each.

This unit will primarily serve as an introduction to the new school year. I chose the topic because I want the unit to serve as an invitation for reluctant readers and speakers to join the lesson freely while also setting the pace for the class during the school year. The unit is designed to help students feel comfortable reading, discussing and writing about selections which they have read.

For my unit, I tried to select a series of stories that are the most widely known. These I have called “ the traditional European tale”. I used these as a starting point and then searched for variations of these stories which contained similar characteristics, but ended differently. For example, in “Rumpelstiltskin” the “droll looking little man” who hobbles in ends up getting so mad that he jumps up and down in such a frenzy that he snaps his leg in two and then disappears. In “Granny Sogando Bam Bam Tario” the old woman runs out of the government house swearing that she will get even with the crab. Both stories are similar in that a young girl is required to guess the name of the person who helps her to complete an impossible task in order to keep her first child.

To lend an air of understanding for a society which depends on handicrafts for survival, I plan to have the students complete one of three weaving assignments. The students can choose to weave a pot holder, a pom pom mat, or a ribbon pillow cover. Other crafts include making origami frog mobiles, model castles and pom pom animals. In each mini-unit, the students can rewrite the stories in a modern form, or write a three paragraph comparison contrast composition which compares two stories within a unit. Inherent in modernizing stories are lessons in creating a plot, and writing paragraphs. The students are asked to think without being told to think in a traditional way. I really think that this non-traditional approach to reading and writing will be effective in an inner-city classroom where tapping into the students creativity leads to interesting lessons.

(Recommended for Chapter 1 Reading, Grades 5-8)

Key Words

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