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

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## Folktales of Zora Neale Hurston

Guide for Curriculum Unit 93.02.10  
by Mary Ellen Riccio

The primary focus of my unit will be Zora Neale Hurston's Afro-American folktales. Her writings capture the flavor and culture of the rural black town of Eatonville, Florida, where she was born and raised. Her folktales reveal the unique customs, speech and humor of the townspeople.

I will use her book "Mules and Men" as the primary source of her folktales. I have already read my class some folktales from her book. They were spellbound. She portrays the culture of Eatonville, Florida exactly and beautifully in this book. This world is far removed from the students' life experiences in New Haven. The people of Eatonville are proud of their town and their heritage. Within the town, everyone has a sense of dignity and importance. Her stories and folktales illustrate how an entire group of people adapted and survived in America, how they modified what they found into a different lifestyle and the behavior the group approves of. Her stories do not deal with race relations, but rather the essence of individuals.

I plan to read most of the stories, or folktales, in this book to my class. I will also include lessons which spark the students' imagination and creativity.

(Recommended for Literature or American History, Grades 6-12)

### **Key Words**

*Afro-American Zora Neale Hurston Literature Women Authors Folktales*

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