



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Drama and African American Folktales: Addressing the Social Development Needs of My Students

Curriculum Unit 93.03.04
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I am a fifth grade teacher at Vincent E. Mauro Elementary School. Previously I taught drama at Dixwell Creative Arts Center, Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School, and Comprehensive Arts. I have worked professionally as a theater artist and actor: also much of my work has involved children's theater. Many of the programs I have been involved with had a predominantly African-American, African-Caribbean, and Hispanic population. This is the population of my students at Vincent E. Mauro School. Many of these students come from single-parent families or foster families, or are being raised by relatives. They also live in economically deprived neighborhoods. The complexities of their lives are revealed in their academic and social behaviors. These students are starving for positive experiences in their lives. I have discovered in the past that drama gave them this experience, both academically and socially.

The main goal of *Drama and African American Folktales* is to address the social development needs of my students. This particular curriculum will combine dramatic, cultural and academic elements. I will work to make my fifth-grade students culturally aware of their heritage, therefore building their self-esteem.

I have selected African-American folktales because that topic will give my students a universal foundation. African-Americans, African-Caribbeans, and Hispanics usually are of African descent.: consequently my students will discover more similarities about themselves, as opposed to the differences they seem to readily point out.

This curriculum unit will give my students a sense of sharing, community, and trust. Drama and African-American Folktales will foster interpersonal relationships between the students. Each lesson will be treated as a workshop. Social development is the key. My students will work on skills in sensitivity, self-control, communication, decision-making, and problem-solving. Each student ought to be feeling good about him or herself, being responsible, and accepting differences in others. The workshop process is the key to their social development, not the play itself.

Drama and African American Folktales is designed to help the fifth grade classroom teacher explore the cultural heritage and social needs of the student population in the New Haven Public School System. The students in my classroom should become more aware of their link to Africa, their own cultural identities, and the cultural heritage of others. The "acting out" part of the folktales ought to allow my students to exhibit appropriate types of social behavior in order to be a part of a culminating performance.

This curriculum unit will show how to use the works of traditional or contemporary folktales in my classroom. The workshops will be implemented over a period of 15 weeks, preferably from October to February. I will be teaching from this curriculum unit once a week. The month of February is usually a celebration of Black History in our New Haven Public School System. A performance will be presented in February as a result of these drama workshops. Elements of the performance selected will grow out of the Afro-centric experience, but it should also reflect the American experience as a whole. The folktale's message ought to be universal.

I have selected three cultures and three styles of dramatic form. The culture and acting style will be combined in the workshop. *Drama and African-American folktales* —will be devoted to scene study for children and will be used during Reading or Language Arts period. The three elements to be taught in my curriculum unit are Narration and Africa, Comedy and Jamaica, and Acting through Dance—Caribbean Music.

Objectives:

I am most concerned that my students discover the link between learning and social skills. They need to recognize that learning is an integral part of their lives. My job as their teacher is to bring life into their school subjects. The classroom should be an active environment. Drama allows students to bring the printed page of any subject to life.

(1) Recognize that the history of narration in the Afro-centric communities goes back to Africa. "It is generally assumed that the Africans sold as slaves came from an oral culture and its traditions. The nations of the Nile Valley, such as Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Sudan, and the independent states of inner West Africa had a strong literary tradition. Documents of this tradition still exist. While it is generally true that the first shipment of slaves from Africa came from West Africa, a serious study of Portuguese and the Arabs along the coast of East Africa shows that after 1600 East Africa, with its headquarters on the island of Zanzibar, became a slave market almost as large as West Africa. A large number of its slaves were sent to South America, especially Brazil, and some went to the Caribbean Island and to the United States.

"The best-known literature about Africans' enforced exile in the United States has led some to assume that slaves were discovering literature for the first time, but a portion of the oral literature used in Africa to teach and preserve their group history later became written literature. In Mester Sudan these histories were called 'tarikhs', the Arab word for history. In other parts of Africa they were called chronicles. Later, Africans in the United States started both an oral and written tradition with the slave narratives. They were written with a desire to be set free. The narratives became the literary expression of the Africans brought to the United States." ¹

- (2) Identify three cultures of African descent.
- (3) Recognize folktales as a model for drama. Recognize African folktales as a literary genre.
- (4) Identify four common characteristics of African narratives.
- (5) Name at least two styles of acting.
- (6) Locate Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Africa on a map or globe.
- (7) Name at least two dance styles of African-Caribbean or Puerto Rico.
- (8) Narrate parts of an African folktale.
- (9) Tell an African folktale.

(10) Participate in performance of an African folktale.

I have chosen Narration and Africa for the first ten weeks of my workshop classes. Since the performance will be based on the African narrative, "Anansi and His Gourd of Wisdom," the students need to truly understand and gain knowledge of this literary genre.

Next, the workshop will include lessons on comedy and Jamaica. I chose comedy as an acting style because the work I do with them should reflect the interests of young people. What child doesn't love to laugh? Much of what they enjoy watching is comic, so this seems a natural choice. By introducing comedy to my students I bring drama to a level they are familiar with. Ask any student for their three favorite television shows, and the answer will either come from television sitcoms or animated television programs. Also, I selected Jamaica as figure for study because the African-Caribbean students in my classroom love sharing the traits of their homeland or their parents' homeland. The Puerto Rican students relate to the Jamaican culture, and many of my previous students have talked about the similarities between the two island cultures. The African-American students love hearing about another way black people live or sound in another country.

Finally, the last two workshop lessons will have the students engaging in dance and listening to the music of the Caribbean. The music my students will be dancing to in this workshop will be used for the final performance.

Strategies:

The strategies I have selected will build a foundation for a theatrical performance that can be presented at any Brotherhood, Multi-cultural, or Black History assembly at an elementary school. These strategies may be followed or altered as the teacher sees fit. They are intended only as a guide for my curriculum unit. Many of the activities can be done during other subjects or time periods, or can be used during lessons from Project Charlie or Second Step (the social development curriculum for New Haven elementary public schools). I will use a number of these strategies, if not all in most of the future productions my classroom will present during up-coming Black History or multi-cultural assemblies- I recommend thinking carefully about the folktale selected to be performed. Make sure there is a theme that is universal, and does not isolate a particular group of people. The workshops and performance are meant to create educated, confident, and proud performers with a knowledge of their cultural heritage to be enjoyed by the whole audience.

(1) *Read and reread the African folktale that is to be performed* . My job as the teacher is to model the way the material is to be presented - No, I do not mean line readings. Each student will have to do his or her part in his or her own unique style or personality. But I will have to model the reflection, the energy, and the social behavior that is required of the performance. My

students enjoy hearing my version or version of the parts they are going to play. By reading the folktale over and over again, you remind the students what they liked about the folktale in the first place and they also may make new and different discoveries about that same folktale each time they hear it done again. I remind myself to try the way I tell the folktale each time. At the beginning of each workshop I will reread or retell the folktale. By the third or fourth workshop, I will choose a student to read the folktale or tell it in his or her own words, whichever the child is comfortable with.

The African folktale my students will be working on is called "Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom." The version of this African folktale was given to me by a fellow African American artist. I have. also a different version by a fellow Hispanic artist, his version was told to me orally. Neither artist had any idea who actually wrote the version of the African folktale they shared with me. This information should be shared with my students. They will realize the tale I am sharing with them was given to me in the same African tradition of our ancestors. I will read a basic version of "Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom."

By the time we perform this folktale many things will have changed and will have. been added.

The African folktale will be read as follows:

(Teacher) The time is before the 1700's. The place is Africa. There once was a great spider named Anansi. The great spider Anansi noticed one day how people other than himself were beginning to use wisdom. This did not suit him at all. He wanted to keep all the wisdom for himself. So he collected all the wisdom and put it into a large gourd. He then hung the gourd up on the wall of his house. But . . . he feared the house wasn't safe enough. So . . . he decided that he would hide it in the bush . . . no man could find it. But he must first to sleep. (Say this in a whisper). The next morning Anansi arose very early took the gourd from the wall and accompanied by his son Anansi went forth into the bush sh sh sh. They came to a tall pale tree. . .Anansi thought if he put the gourd on top of the palm tree it would be QUITE safe. So he began to climb the tree. But the gourd was slung in front of him and it kept getting in his way. He could not make any progress. Now the son of the spider had been watching for some time and finally cried out, "Father, why not sling the gourd over your back. " Anansi answered, "My son, you are right, your words show to me that it is better for many people to have wisdom rather than one. For alone I should not have thought of that. " So Anansi the great spider opened the gourd and scattered the wisdom all over the ground so that he who wants wisdom could gather it at will.

Knowing that this will be the folktale presented for the performance, I will have to decide how the folktale will actually be presented at the culminating performance.

(2) Decide which roles the students will benefit the most from while we are working on this production . Remember the main objective is to address the development of the social needs of my students. As a result, I look at the personalities of my students, think of their strengths and weaknesses, and apply the social skills they will be working on to the role they will be playing in this workshop. When I refer to "role," it may be a performance role or a technical role. What I mean is, I must decide where my student fits in. How will the student most benefit from this way of learning? Make sure the child is working on a happy production. Try to avoid situations or "roles", where the child can be humiliated or embarrasses.

In “Anansi and the Gourd of wisdom” script I have adapted two major speaking roles, two minor speaking roles, and the rest of the folktale is done with the class performing the lines in unison. Basically, there is something that can be done by each and every one of my students, and if the student does not like to perform in front of an audience, there is make-up, music, and art that is to be done. No student should feel he or she does not belong.

(3) *Explore which theater activities will be most suited for the workshop presented that day* . Here are some examples of theater activities that incorporate social development skills.

A. “Trust”—The students will stand in a tight circle, one student will stand in the middle of the circle with his or her eyes closed. The teacher will spin the student around in a circle. The student has to fall back freely as the students in the outer circle pass the child around slowly. This exercise must be done in total silence- Each student has to concentrate on the situation. After 4 or 5 students have experienced the activity, they will share their feeling with the group. Some students will discuss what it felt like to be in the outer circle. Social skills developed are trust, sensitivity, self-control and silent communication.

B. “Statue.”—One child sits completely still on a chair, no facial expression or movement of the body. Another child approaches the chair; he or she tries to get the “statue” out of the chair by using words, ONLY words; the child should be instructed not to touch the “statue” at all (you may have to repeat this twice to more aggressive students); the words should lead the “statue” out of the chair. for example, yelling words like “Fire!” “Excuse-u-u-se me!” or telling jokes to make the “statue” laugh hysterically. Social development skill is self-control.

C. Real Fast or Re-e-e-e-e-l-l-l-y Sl-o-o-o-w. Students use lines from the folktale they are performing and say the lines extremely fast or extremely slow. Social development skills are concentration, self-control, sensitivity to others, and self awareness. (Also, a great exercise for memorizing lines).

D. Charades. Students really enjoy this game and I get improvisation out of them without scaring them with the word “improvisation.

” Social development skills are sharing, community and self-esteem.

E. Rapping. Students share raps based on African narratives that they wrote themselves. Social development skills are community, sharing, self-discipline, and self-esteem.

F. Role-playing (Family). Student can discuss and brainstorm about family expectations for the following people: a girl (age 11), a boy (age 9), a mother, a father, and maybe other relatives living at home, such as older sisters and brothers, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Encourage class discussion on the different populations that make up their own families. Have students role-playing familiar family situations, problems, or crisis. Social development skills are stress responsibilities, attitude, behavior, decision-making and sharing.

The purpose of these theater games and others is first to introduce to my students the uses of theater games as effective and exciting learning tools; second, to present these games within the context of theater, reading, and language arts. Theater games attempt to duplicate “real life.” I have to be selective about which games to use for which lesson; I should have full knowledge of the process or the environment (the folktale) I am trying to recreate. The theater game for that workshop must be relevant to the purpose of that days lesson.

Students enjoy theater games and “playing “ because they are familiar with games that involve the players operating under specific rules, to gain goal. All my theater games used for my curriculum unit must involve social development skills and elements of “real life.”

One of the most important elements of the rehearsal process is the use of improvisation. As a result, role playing will be a theater game that should be used quite often. Role playing is important for the social development process because it encourages decision making on the part of the student.

(4) Give children the opportunity to work with other theater exercises not only during reading and language arts, but also during art, social studies or history . This curriculum unit is designed to enhance the teaching of drama by integrating this art form into reading and language arts, but if I am working on a social studies or history lesson that involves Africa, why not use this unit? By using it during reading, language arts, social studies and history the students conceive drama as being interdisciplinary. It is not merely doing a play or performance—the study of theater utilizes the work of all fifth grade subjects. It links learning to society or community, therefore strengthening their social development skills.

During the first few workshops on narration I can teach geography lessons on Africa during social studies and history. West Africa or Ghana will be my choice of study, because it is believed that the Anansi folktales originated in Ghana. Hopefully, I can get a musician-storyteller from West Africa named Max Amoh, he works at the African Studies Department at Yale University. He is not only a good choice for story-telling, he is also an excellent resource for social studies. He leads a summer institute on Africa for teachers at Yale.

a) Art Activities—(1) Have students draw pictures of the map of Africa and indicate where Ghana or West Africa is. (2) Make a large mural indicating how narratives travel from people to people through Africa. (3) Set up a display of products made from wood or minerals from Africa.

b) Social Studies or History. (1) Make a chart comparing early African ancestors to African slaves to African-Americans during the Civil Rights Movement to the African-Americans of today. (2) List ways in which African-American, African-Caribbean, and Hispanic customs are used in your family. (3) Write a narrative as a member of an African tribe and tell your experiences to your classmates. (4) Role-play the responsibilities and decision making by an early African family in their everyday life. Include roles for leadership and division of work. (5) Exchange letters with class in West Africa. Explore other areas of meeting African people.

Performance:

I have dealt with the cultural and academic elements of the first part of my curriculum unit. Now for another element, drama and/or performance; this is a major key in my students social development growth. Now my students have a foundation for performance from my preview workshop which included their academic disciplines (language arts and reading) and cultural awareness (through history and social studies). They can now start the rehearsal and artistic process for performance.

The best way to have my children give an enjoyable, educating, entertaining performance is through my well

thought out design. Many teachers who have not worked in drama, think that a play is just for “fun.”

Acting—I will explain to my students that the purpose for performing “Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom “ is to experience a sense of joy and fulfillment when approaching a role or piece of work creatively. (I am very enthusiastic about this topic since I spent my college years doing theater.)

The goal of my student as actor is to “merge your whole self with another self.” What could be more exciting for my students? I will suggest to my students to always deal with real “truths.” Realism is the foundation for good dramatic instruction. Without realism, you get the “cardboard” acting I have seen in so many school plays. The rehearsal part of my workshop will come after the lesson of that week. But as we get closer to the performance, most likely in the middle of January, the whole workshop will deal with rehearsal and the technical aspects of the performance. Talent and intelligence should be encouraged when the student is working on his or her character. The student’s ability to put into practice what was taught about social development skills will now be in focus.

Objectives for Acting Instruction:

- a) Visualization—“Smell” the perfume, “See” the money.
- b) Saying your lines in your own words.
- c) Saying your lines in a normal speaking voice to a friend in class, your teacher.
- d) Association—Relate the situation in the folktale to a real experience.
- e) Talk about the mood of the folktale.
- f) Imagination—Relate it to daydreaming.
- g) Know your character—Give Anansi, or even the palm tree a distinct personality.

After I have my students’ attention and commitment to play out their “roles,” I must be committed to them in play out of my “role.” Once I am in rehearsal process, I now become the director. (I often have to point this out to my students during this type of project) This means I look at my students as individuals in an artistic manner. Some of my slow learners or difficult students give “award winning “ performances. You would be surprised to see what your children can do when given the chance to fly.

Objectives for Directing: (The Teacher)

- a) Know the folktale (background information, moral implications, and experience behind it).
- b) Have a vision. Try to make my students’ performance very unique.
- c) Have a style.
- d) Be critical. Here you have to know when to be gentle or firm with your young actors.

e) Appreciate their achievements.

There will be some students who will not wish to perform. I never insist on a performance from a student. I believe. theater is truth. Theater is freedom. If I am forcing my student to perform, I am not respecting his or her feelings. If a student does not want to perform, I put that student in charge of costumes, make-up visual arts, music, sound or props. All of these are ways my student can express his or her commitment to “Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom.”

Sample: Beginning of work and a Performance of “Anansi and His Gourd of Wisdom.”

Any teacher designs his or her own Anansi story. Look how I change the basic folktale. Have students offer ideas also.

African or Caribbean music is played at the beginning.

Students who have been designated as dancers enter through the audience. (I also like to use a first or second grade class for this, along with my students.)

Speaker:

Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom, the time is before the 1700’s. The place is Africa.

(The stage is bare. Actors dressed in black enter in a semicircle. Moved by the African drumming, dancers dance to their places on stage .)

Narrator:

There once was a great spider named Anansi. *(Anansi enters using spider-like movements .)*

The great spider Anansi noticed one day how people other than himself were beginning to use wisdom. This did not suit him at all. *(Anansi stomps in rhythm along with this line .)* He wanted to keep all the wisdom for himself.

Anansi:

I think I’ll get me some of this wisdom.

Narrator:

So Anansi comes in to a forest. *(Actors and dancers keep swinging arms wildly .)* He comes upon a woodcarver who is carving a funny wooden face next comes upon a beautiful young artist who is painting all the animals of the forest. finally, he comes upon an old woman who is weaving YARDS and YARDS of magnificent cloth. Anansi SAYS!

Anansi:

I think I'll take all of his wisdom, and hers and hers. (*grinning*)

Narrator:

Once again, Anansi wanted to keep all the wisdom for himself. So he collected all the wisdom and put it into a large gourd

He then hung the gourd up on the wall of the house. (*All the actors run and stand side by side with arms straight in the air and fingers pointed upward .*)

But . . . (*Actors swing bodies round and round flapping arms toward audience*) he feared his was not safe enough.

Anansi:

I'm not putting my gourd in there, it doesn't look safe. Un huh! No Way!

Narrator:

So he decided if he would hide it in a bush sh sh . . . (*Actors curve back and arms toward audience quickly*) no man could find it.

Anansi:

I'll put my gourd in there. I bet it's safe. (*Aside .*) Don't you think I should put my gourd in this bush? (*Anansi puts gourd over arms, out comes the actors as snake from the tight semicircle*)Snake:S s s s s s s s
Anan s-s-s-e-e-e-e. Give me s-s-s. . . s-s-s. . . some. . . s. . . s-s. . . dom. (*Anansi screams and runs around the bush .*)

Narrator:

Anansi decided he would put his gourd into the wilds of the jungle. (*Actors now wave their arms from side to side*).

Anansi:

I think I'll put my gourd in here. What do you think, Son? Oh, Son? Son? (*So enters stage with spider-like movements .*) Do you think I should put my gourd in that jungle?

Son:

I don't know Papa. It looks pretty scary to me. (*Aside*) Don't you think it looks pretty scary?

Anansi:

Oh, be quiet. What do you know? This is a great place to put my wisdom. I will continue on from here. Any teacher can develop a folktale into a play. Remember to read through the folktale over and over, along with your students. If you encourage ideas from your students, the motivation, interest, and insights gained by your students will be my reward for my efforts on addressing social development issues.

Drama as a learning tool in the classroom adds a holistic approach to education. A sequence of lessons will be scheduled in this order.

Here are some descriptions of my ideas for lessons for *Drama and African-American Folktales* : Addressing the Social Development Needs of my students is designed for !the 1993-1994 school year. The unit will be used

from October to February. Some Sample Descriptive Lessons:

Sample Lesson 1—"Narratives" (Reading Period) Oral reading lesson. I will read an African Folktale from African Folktales—Traditional Stories of the Black world. Introduce and talk about Anansi.

Sample Lesson 2—A theater activity on trust will be done. "Narratives" (Reading Period). Oral reading of "Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom" students will recite the folktale.

Sample Lesson 3—"Narratives" (Social Studies and History Period) Students will read information about west Africa, Ghana in particular. Students will do an activity. Students will relate "Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom" in relation to Africa.

Sample Lesson 4—"Narratives" (Language Period) Students will discuss the relationship of Anansi and his son. Students will write about family situations at home. One student will tell "Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom" in his or her own words. Students will discuss oral speaking.

Sample Lesson 5—"Narratives" (Reading Period) Students will read "Why the Mosquito Buzzes in People's Ears" in large group. Students will improvise community relations, based on the folktale.

Sample Lesson 6—"Narratives" (Art Period) Students will say "Anansi and His Gourd of Wisdom" in unison. Do an art activity.

Sample Lesson 7—"Narratives" (Social Studies and History Period) Students will read about African life of their ancestor, their customs and traditions.

"How African folktales fit into this tradition?" A theater game relating to this topic.

Sample Lesson 8—(Social Studies and History Period) Compare African-American, African-Caribbean, and Hispanic life. Students will look at slides, a filmstrip, or a video that looks at these populations. A Social Studies activity.

After my students have mastered the objectives for acting instruction, they can work on a particular style of acting. I have selected comedy for my students. Now my students will learn, discuss, and experience the comic aspects of African American folktales. The students should now be able to fully understand the literary elements of African American folktales through their lessons on narration. Now they are ready to start some acting! Acting itself can bring students joy, excitement, a higher self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment.

My lessons on Comedy and Jamaica will focus on the cultural identities of Jamaicans or west Indians. I will not deal so much with the geography of Jamaica, but I will work with the development of an appreciation for the beauty of the people and their language. The students will act out "Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom" in class. This will be done after the students have demonstrated comprehension of the selected Jamaican phrases. I will be adding to the Anansi folktale.

Objectives for Comedy and Jamaica:

- a) Students will create characters and situations that are funny.
- b) Students will be made aware the humor comes from playing the reality. You never *act* funny! You are funny because of a believable circumstance.
- c) Students will become aware of Jamaican customs.
- d) Students will compare cultural differences and similarities of the Jamaican community with the other cultural groups in my class.

Activities:

- a) Students will listen to a Jamaican folktale performed by Shawn Willis, a storyteller who performed a Jamaican folktale for my after-school enrichment program in 1992. She will discuss Jamaica and her heritage with the students. She will perform a folktale. Usually, she asks students to improvise certain parts of the folktale when she is finished. Finally, she recommends a list of books for the students.
- b) Students will act out characteristics of the Jamaican culture through improvisation. They will not be stereotypes. The activity is intended to give students a chance to explore the customs of another culture.
- c) Students will perform "Anansi and His Gourd of wisdom" and the folktale will include words or phrases from the Jamaican culture.

The last workshop lessons will be included in Acting through Dance —Caribbean Music. Hopefully, Shari Caldwell, Michelle Edmonds, or Paul Hall can come in and introduce basic African dance moves (I have worked with all of these dancers they are not only top notch African dancers, but they also work very well with children.) I will encourage the children to create their own unique style and personality to their characters' dance performance. This is a significant part of the curriculum unit, but it is also the smallest section. Why? I have found in the past that fifth graders are uninhibited when it comes to dancing and rhythm and dance. They are introduced to my African Americans and Hispanic children at an early age (at least the students that I have worked with in the past). Consequently, movement can be introduced just days before a performance and they usually do well. Caribbean music will be played because of the previous lessons on Comedy and Jamaica.

Objectives for Acting through Dance:

- a) Students will identify different music styles of the Caribbean-African people, for example,

Calypso, Reggae, Cha-Cha, and Merengue.

- b) Students will be able to relate situations, characters, or moods in the folktale to the type of performance music.
- c) Students will learn how rhythm and dance add to the mood of a play.

Drama and African American Folktales: Addressing the Social Development Needs of My Students. will fit well into my students' academic program for next year. This unit will end with a performance for the Brotherhood Assembly at our school. Anansi folktales provide memorable characters who are involved in some comical situation, witty exchange, or moral dilemma, and will stimulate my students' imaginations, learning, and hopefully their ambitions.

Acting Through Dance—Caribbean Music

Objectives:

Students will master the necessary steps or movement needed for performance.

Students will listen to music from the Caribbean.

Warm-up Activity

1. Ask students to share dance or movement that is done in their homes or communities.
2. Have students name favorite dancers from the entertainment industry.
3. Have students watch a small performance(very small) from the guest dance teacher.
4. Give more background information on Jamaica.

Materials

1. Caribbean music or live musicians.
2. Map of Jamaica.

Direct Teaching

1. Explain the need and importance for dance in "Anansi and His Gourd of Wisdom."
2. . Explain that people of African descent all have. different styles of dance,but they are all an very creative. Name them.
3. Explain that their dancing is an act of individual self-expression.
4. Have students dance. Guest teacher will give instructions for the choreography.

Evaluation—Closing

1. Students can identify different styles of dance in the Caribbean.
2. Students will explain why dance is important in theater.
3. Students will perform dance taught in the lesson.
4. Students will dance freestyle.

Comedy and Jamaica

Objective

1. Student will act out folktale read in-class.
2. Student will demonstrate comprehension of the dialogue in “Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears.”
3. Student will respond to questions based on dialogue and paraphrase dialogue.

Initiation

Warm-up Activity—Students will play a theater game for ten minutes. For example, one student is sent out of the room while the other students focus on an object in the room (maybe they pick a chair). They let the student enter the class. They clap hands as the student moves closer to the object. If the one student discovers the object by the sounds of their claps, they applaud wildly.

Vocabulary

Dialogue, paraphrase, adaptation, dialect, improvisation. Write vocabulary on board with definitions. Discuss words.

Predict

Students will discuss the title of “Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears” and look at the illustrations of the folktale. They will predict what happens in the tale.

Background

Tell students that “Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears” is a West African Folktale.

Explain that we will be making an adaptation from the folktale. Have students share what they know about African American folktales and Jamaica.

Web their answers on the board.

Reading, Oral Rereading, and Theater

Read “Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears” to the class.

Have students read parts of the dialogue aloud. The teacher will provide as narrator for the parts that are in

quotes. Allow the students to read parts of their, choice. The teacher will model some lines, giving an emphasis on a Jamaican dialect and greetings.

Writing

Make a list describing the character of the mosquito. Tell students to describe and predict what the mosquitoes personality, speech, physical appearance and mood will be like when acted out.

Closing activity

Have students summarize the folktale by re-calling main events. Groups of students will act out events rising improvisation.

Notes

1. Roger D. Abrahams, *African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983, pg. xi.

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