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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1998 Volume II: Cultures and Their Myths

African Myths and What They Teach

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.02.03
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The unit “African Myths and What They Teach” can be used alone or more ideally as part of a larger unit on Africa. The unit is geared to grade three although the materials can be used with children in grade two through five. The approach used in the unit is to present the myths so they are both entertaining and relevant. Joseph Campbell, the world's foremost authority on myth, wrote that the function of myth is in a great part the passing down of the traditions and beliefs of a culture. At their best, mythology, fables, legends, etc., seek to educate people at various ages and show them how to deal with the problems of life and to explain the physical world as we know it. The unit presents some of the many myths that deal with nature, human behavior, and creation. These stories are used to discuss with the children ideas about friendship, manners, and scientific truths which they can apply to their own lives. There is a list of integrated activities that can be used with the myths. The activities range from the areas of science to writing, art, music and geography. There is also a bibliography for students and teachers.

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