

Folk Tales Transformed

Length:	30 minutes
School:	Intermediate School 237
Location:	Flushing, Queens, N.Y.
Grade:	8
Teachers:	Nelle Stokes, Visiting Theatre Artist Martha Morenstein, 8th-Grade Language Arts Judi Roseman, Visual Art
Description:	Eighth-graders use folk tales as the basis for crafting original theatre pieces.

About This Program

This program highlights a collaboration between an eighth-grade language arts teacher and a visiting theatre artist, and the help they get from their school's visual art teacher. Their collaboration revolves around a semester-long project in which students explore folk tales from different cultures and write modern versions of them. Using folk tales as texts is particularly appropriate here, as Flushing, Queens is an extremely diverse New York City community. The school has a large Asian population as well as many Hispanic and African American students.

Over the course of several language arts classes, we hear from students about how they chose their folk tales and what they have learned by adapting them. We see their rehearsals in the school auditorium, where they become comfortable with being onstage and realize what it takes to make a successful dramatic presentation. In art class, students work to create a backdrop and props.

The principal collaborators meet frequently to discuss their work and the students' progress. We also hear from several students about what they are learning, and get a taste of their final presentations.

Arts and Non-Arts Standards Addressed in This Program

Standards listed refer to the McREL Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks, a synthesis of national standards in each of the disciplines, found at www.mcrel.org.

Theatre

Standard 2: Uses acting skills

Visual Arts

Standard 1: Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts

Language Arts

Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Viewing Suggestions

Who Should Watch This Program

Teachers—“Folk Tales Transformed” will be particularly interesting to teachers who want to build an interdisciplinary project that culminates in a public performance.

Visiting artists—This program can help visiting artists introduce teachers to a collaborative approach to teaching from which both can benefit.

Administrators and professional development providers—This program provides a model for how teachers and visiting artists can work together to meet goals in arts and non-arts subjects.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions.

- What are folk tales? What are some things folk tales have in common across all cultures?
- How might folk tales help structure the storytelling process for students?
- Can traditional folk tales be made relevant for today’s student? How? What do they have to say to today’s student?
- What artistic disciplines would be good to incorporate into a study of folk tales? How might a collaboration like this work at your school? Whom could you involve in a folk tale project?

Watch the Program

As you watch, notice places where the arts nurture collaborative relationships among students. Write down instances in which arts elements become infused into, and enrich, students’ own stories.

Reflect on the Program

- What evidence, if any, did you see of the ways students benefited from this unit of study?
- How, in particular, did theatre and visual art strengthen students’ storytelling?
- What kinds of preparation do you think preceded the lessons seen in the program? How do you prepare your students to be creative in an interdisciplinary unit?
- How do these teachers’ working relationships and the schools’ resources support the type of instruction shown?
- Which components of the study—theatre, visual art, multimedia—would be most challenging for you and your colleagues to incorporate in an integrated unit? Which would be most natural? Why?

Additional Resources

Consult some of these resources for more information.

Books

Ragan, Kathleen, & Yolen, Jane. *Fearless Girls, Wise Women, and Beloved Sisters: Heroines in Folktales From Around the World*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000. ISBN: 0393320464

Stern, Anita. *World Folktales—An Anthology of Multicultural Folk Literature, Teacher’s Guide*. Lincolnwood, Ill.: National Textbook Publishing Group, 1994. ISBN: 0844207829

Walker, Lois. *Readers Theatre Strategies in the Middle and Junior High Classroom*. Colorado Springs, Col.: Meriwether Publishing, 1997. ISBN: 1566080274

Yolen, Jane. *Favorite Folk Tales From Around the World*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988. ISBN: 0394751884

Web Sites

The Alma Project: A Cultural Curriculum Infusion Model: A curriculum including characteristics of folk tales, as well as folk tales from the Spanish-American tradition
[http://almaproject.dpsk12.org/stories/storyReader\\$22](http://almaproject.dpsk12.org/stories/storyReader$22)

Story Arts Online: A site dedicated to the art of storytelling, including stories, plots, lesson plans, activities, links, and classroom resources
<http://www.storyarts.org/index.html>

Storynet, National Storytelling Network: A site that brings together and nurtures individuals and organizations that use the power of storytelling in all its forms
<http://www.storynet.org/>

Tim Sheppard’s Storytelling Resources for Storytellers: An extensive collection of storytelling resources that are annotated and categorized for easy reference
<http://www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/index.html>

Elements of Folktales: A unit of study where students read traditional folk tales and view filmed versions of those stories
<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2212/>

Notes
