

All Around the World: Folk Tales for the Digital Age

Unit Overview

Objective:

To give 8th-grade students the opportunity to experience every phase of the creative process of making a play — from research and writing, through acting and rehearsal, to visual arts, animation, and finally —production.

Through this 8-month residency, participants will gain valuable experience in small group learning, problem-solving, and critical thinking. They will combine technology from the past (such as papier-mâché and shadow puppets) and the future (computer animation) to create a multi-layered theatrical collection of folk tales from around the world, featuring puppetry, ‘story theatre’ techniques, and video projection. The project will culminate in a full production for parents and students on May 1st. One folktale, with animation, will be restaged for the District’s Digital Arts Festival on May 22nd. Students will then engage in written reflections about the project.

The History of the Project:

In early fall of 2002, class 8-15 studied world folktales in their Language Arts curriculum. Under teacher Martha Morenstein, they separated into small production groups and selected a folktale. Next they adapted it to reflect their own time, tastes, and personalities. Teaching Artist Nelle Stokes joined the class in November, and helped them begin editing and revising. They made lists of the necessary props and settings, and began to visualize their pieces for performance.

Next came the rehearsal process. Theatre games gave them confidence in the use of their bodies and voices. Students learned the navigation system of the theatre: ‘upstage,’ ‘downstage,’ ‘stage left’ and ‘stage right.’ They practiced their ‘blocking’ (movements around the stage) as they learned their lines. They were given deadlines and expected to keep them. In their small groups, they learned the importance of working together as a team.

Meanwhile, another group of students in the Visual Arts Talent class were constructing most of the props, sets, and animated sequences under Art Teacher Judi Roseman. Three students who were in both the Language Arts and Art classes acted as ‘reporters’ and gave periodic progress reports to other students. Some students concentrated on puppets, others on masks or costumes, and others on the computer animations.

In the Music Talent class, students began creating vocal accompaniment for the show. Ms. Stokes scheduled weekly and bimonthly production meetings with the Language Arts, Visual Art and Music teachers to share information and check on progress.

Digital Arts Residency Timeline

Here's a list that's etched in Jello, of deadlines and goals to be accomplished

DATE	CLASS	TASK
End of Dec.	Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scripts completed, include Intro and epilogue.
	Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storyboards completed, Animation in process
January	Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin blocking script (8 sessions)
	Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct props Continue animation
February	Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue blocking
	Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish animation Construct costumes
	Choral Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearse music, record if necessary
March	Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish blocking 3/13
	Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish animation 3/13
	Choral Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearse music, begin meetings with Nelle to place music in show
April	Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full Rehearsal
	Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All props/costumes finished 4/3
	Choral Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue rehearsals