

Section I

Grades Kindergarten – Grade 2

***When Tortoise Wins:
Using International Folktales to Teach Language Arts***

Content Enhancement Strategies

For Grades K-2

Background on the Development of these Materials

During the first breakout session of the workshop, the K-2 group of teachers started their discussion by delving into how to select a respectful, authentic piece of literature representing people from another culture. This topic gave way to two presentations on culture-specific information from East Asia and then Africa; in other words, what do teachers need to know about these two cultures in order to teach a story from one of these regions and forge an accurate understanding and positive portrayal of each culture? The second breakout session commenced with a discussion and then collaborative group work exploring the principles of culturally diverse classrooms and curriculum. The teachers then drew upon their expertise of working with young children (ages 5-7 years old), who have limited concrete experiences with the international community, and brainstormed a list of fundamental experiences allowing young children to construct meaning from new cultural information. The group's work is summarized in the box below.

What Young Children Need to Construct Meaning from New Information:

- 1) The information must be able to be used in meaningful and practical ways.
- 2) The information must be connected to real life experiences and children's current understanding of the world around them..
- 3) Children must develop the vocabulary needed to understand or apply the new information, and this is best facilitated by providing concrete materials and examples to illustrate the new information.
- 4) A variety of multi-sensory experiences should be provided that allow children to interact with the new information in different ways.
- 5) Children should be allowed to "nibble" on new information, taking in small pieces of new information gradually rather than trying to cover too much material at one time.
- 6) Young children require repetition in order to master new material and skills; the new information should be presented numerous times and in different ways to present children with repeated opportunities to develop the most accurate understanding.
- 7) Because young children will approach new cultural information with a wide range of background experiences and understanding, experiences should be provided that encourage divergent thinking, creativity and are flexible so as to address the continuum of awareness of cultural diversity. Stated another way, how do teachers encourage children with a stronger sense of cultural diversity to share their knowledge with children who have had limited experiences and what kinds of experiences will allow children to make these connections with other children in their classroom community.

Guided by this generated list of learning principles, the K-2 group divided into teams of three to four teachers each and selected a folktale from either East Asia or Africa. The collective goal was to create a compilation of teaching strategies inspired by each international folktale that would support teacher's in their efforts to develop and sustain a classroom environment and curriculum that reflects as well as values the human diversity of our everyday lives. How could using international folktales to teach both diversity and content standards become a way of life, rather than simply teaching lessons around certain topics or units? Faced with this question, each group's objective was to generate a list of content enhancement strategies for their selected folktale that would enable teachers to infuse the curriculum with experiences that teach diversity to young children in appropriate ways. The inherent nature of the activities generated encourages teaching the content standards in not only language arts, but also science, math and social studies across grades K-2. The culminating product is not a list of completed lesson plans but rather a springboard for thought of how these folktales may be creatively intertwined with current units of study or how they could address teaching skills and concepts in different content areas in addition to teaching children about diversity. The specific work of how to adapt these ideas for the age group one works with is left up to the individual teacher based on the abilities of the children in that classroom and the parameters of the curriculum within one must teach.

Folktales from East Asia

Summary of **The Princess and the Beggar** a tale from Korea

This story is notable for the elements of filial piety (respect for family and elders) and Confucian virtues. The daughter defies her father's wishes for her marriage, something unthinkable in the Confucian system. Matches were made by parents, and defying the father's wishes results in a turn for the worse for the girl. The princess at first appears to be the docile girl that is stereotypical of East Asian culture. However, the reader learns she has a passion for learning and reading, something not condoned by Confucian thought but was often a reality. Girls were not encouraged to be educated, but girls of good families often were. Note also that in the story the princess draws on her inner strength to mold her beggar husband into a man—teaching him to ride a horse, read, and compose poetry (the skills of a nobleman). This story is about growing up as much as it is about a particular time in Korean history. In the end, the king's acceptance of his daughter and her beggar husband is an act of humanity and reason, yet fits with the Confucian framework of being willing to change your ways if you have been in error (even if you are king).

The Princess and the Beggar Content Enhancement Strategies

LANGUAGE ARTS:

- One of the ways to use this folktale in the classroom would be to have the children act out the story. A dramatic retelling would address the content standards that center around reading comprehension and identifying specific elements of a story line. Using a story map, children could work in small teams and identify the basic elements of the story, summarize the plot, provide supporting details and then plan how they would retell the story with or without props for the rest of the class.
- Another way to address language arts standards using the folktale could include an exploration into different forms of poetry since the story concludes with a poetry contest. Ideas could include writing poetry on scrolls, studying different forms of East Asian poetry, creating a class poem, sharing different poetry samples and having children illustrate them, or teaching sight words or new vocabulary by introducing them in a specific poem.
- The story includes samples of traditional Korean stamp designs. Children could create their own stamp designs using a variety of stamp art techniques (see your school's art teacher or the list of resources at the end). The project could include children creating a story of how their stamp evolved, what is its significance and how it is used to communicate with others.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE:

- The book introduces several Korean words. A game could be created where children learn the words before a repeated reading and then respond when they hear those words in the story by holding up a sign or performing a specific movement. The book could be a springboard for a discussion of how people from different cultures have their own language. A class graph could be made of how many different languages are spoken by children in the class (which also incorporates math standards).
- The book could be used to illustrate how people of East Asia have distinctly different forms of language when coupled with other outside resources available at the local library or through the International Studies Department. For example, people in Japan, Korea and China do not all speak the same; have children compare the different ways these 3 areas say the numbers 1 through 10.

The Princess and the Beggar Content Enhancement Strategies

SOCIAL STUDIES:

- The illustrations of children in traditional Korean clothing could be used to explore historical and modern perspectives of Korea. A discussion could begin about how are the children in the class alike and different from modern Korean children. This study could go as far as trying to set up an internet correspondence with a Korean school where children could exchange information about their daily lives e.g., what are they studying, what do they eat, what games do they play, what kind of television shows do they watch, etc.
- The illustrations of different types of homes could be used to study different forms of architecture and the resources of a region. Focus questions could include: 1) Why does architecture vary from place to place? What elements remain relatively the same? 2) Does architecture vary with the materials most readily available or does it relate more to the types of weather in a region? This could also be another way to introduce the comparison/contrast between historical and modern perspectives of Korea.
- The beggar character could be a catalyst for a discussion about not prejudging people based on appearances. This topic could be used for creative writing assignments e.g. have children write a fictional story about a child who is excluded because of the way he/she looks and tell the children they are in a position to do something positive about the situation. Have them write about what they would do to make that person feel like they belonged or what they would do to get to know that person.
- The theme of disobeying one's parents and suffering consequences is one many children can identify with; this could be used to help children see how they share something in common with the Korean princess. Again, this theme could become a story starter for a creative writing assignment where writing and reading standards could also be addressed. Another project could include having half the class tell the story from the perspective of the princess and the other half of the class tell the story from the perspective of the king.

Summary of JoJoFu, a tale from Japan

Although this story doesn't have any obvious cultural content, it is a great story to use for that very reason. One of the ways in which teachers develop a truly diverse curriculum is by using materials that reflect cultural diversity on a regular basis and allow children to see people of different cultures represented in accurate and respectful ways. This book does exactly that. The costumes and illustrations in the book are a very accurate portrayal of life in pre-modern Japan. The word jojofu means a heroine, a brave and spirited woman. This is a name of an Akita breed dog that becomes the heroine of the story. In the story the dog repeatedly rescues her master despite his unwillingness to trust her as he should. When the man finally declares that he will trust her, his trust is put to the ultimate test.

JoJoFu Content Enhancement Strategies

LANGUAGE ARTS:

- The story's plot is exciting and adventurous, one that will appeal to young children and one that would readily inspire children to create new adventures of JoJoFu and Takomi (the master in the story). The children could be encouraged to create their own versions of a new JoJoFu adventure either as a writing assignment or as a dramatic retelling with puppets or through acting.
- Children could be engaged in a writing activity where they tell the same story of JoJoFu from the perspective of one of Takomi's other dogs in the story. Do the other dogs see JoJoFu as a heroine or do they have other feelings towards her? How do their perceptions influence their behavior?
- The illustrations depicting different types of weather could be used as a springboard to other creative expression activities e.g. sharing poetry about weather and using the illustrator's designs as inspiration for children illustrating poems about weather or writing their own poetry.
- JoJoFu acted like Takomi's eyes and ears in the story. This element of the text could be used to introduce children to the concept of similes. Children could be engaged in different activities that have them list or use different similes they are familiar with. Or perhaps after reading this story and teaching children about similes, children could be read other stories that use similes and the children would have to identify the similes used in the storylines.
- Children could be exposed to the art of using Japanese story boards (available through the Asian Studies Resource Library) and having seen this art modeled, could then be encouraged to use this storytelling form to create their own story boards for the stories they create in the above activities or simply to retell the story of JoJoFu.

JoJoFu Content Enhancement Strategies

SOCIAL STUDIES

- The concept of animals helping people could be lifted from the storyline and used as the topic of a non-fiction class book on how animals are used to help people in pre-modern or modern times. Children could be on designated teams that research different animals and write and illustrate a specific section of the classbook.
- A Venn diagram could be created to compare and contrast the types of pets kept in America and Japan or to examine the roles of dogs in different cultures. The study into dogs could lend itself to guest speakers e.g., someone who trains police dogs or dogs who assist people with vision problems. A writing assignment could be asking each child to generate 2 or 3 questions to ask the guest speaker. For older children, the assignment might be taking on the role of reporters and interviewing several guest speakers who come to visit the class for a day. Afterwards the children could report their findings to the class on a mock newscast.
- Again the illustrations depicting the weather, seasonal setting and geographical location of the story could all be used to introduce discussions and topics of study. For example, children could get weather reports from Japan and compare them with the weather in America. Charts and graphs could be made that compare rainfall, snow, temperatures, etc.
- In the story Takomi uses chopsticks. This could inspire a study into the customs of Japan or East Asia which could become a larger discussion of how people eat all over the world, including examining American eating habits and helping children realize the way we eat may seem quite different to people from other cultures. Takomi eats rice and fish in the story. This could lead into an investigation of the types of food commonly enjoyed in Japan—hopefully illustrating that in other countries they have many of the similar foods we have in America and that also staples, such as rice, are widespread throughout the world (rather than erroneously associated primarily with the Asian culture).

MATH CONCEPTS:

- A Japanese recipe could be shared in the class to expose children to other types of food, and through this cooking activity content standards in math, such as learning fractions, could be addressed. A large chart-sized recipe could be created from which the class could read and follow directions. For older children the activity could be made more challenging by having the children figure out how to “double the recipe” in order to make a sufficient amount for the entire class.
- A class graph could be made of how many children do or do not have dogs (or a graph that charts all the different pets owned by children in the class). This information could be used to address all sorts of math standards from comparing data for the most or least popular pet to calculating the median or average for certain categories.

Folktales from Africa

Summary of **A Story, A Story** An African tale by Gail E. Hailey

This tale recounts how most African folktales came to be called “Spider Stories.” A long time ago we are told that there were no stories for the children to hear. All stories belonged to Nyame, the sky god. So Ananse the Spider man purchased a golden box of stories from the sky god Nyame. This story is told in flavorful prose and illustrated with dramatic woodcuts in vivid colors. This is a wonderful version of the story and is a splendid picture book for sharing with a group.

A Story, A Story Content Enhancement Strategies

LANGUAGE ARTS:

- Since this is a tale about the origins of stories it can be a great inspiration for children to develop their own tales of how certain stories came to be or where stories come from.
- Another activity to try is having the children sit in a circle and create a “spider web” story about how stories came to be. The teacher begins the activity with a story starter and passes a ball of yarn to another child in the group; this child adds a piece to the story and then passes the yarn ball to another person. The activity continues until everyone has had a chance to contribute; the end result is a “web” in the middle of the group.
- Tales of how things came to be are popular in African folklore. If children are inspired by the tale of Ananse the Spiderman you might consider researching other tales of origin e.g., how the leopard got its spots. After reading more of such stories provide children with pictures of different animals and have them create their own stories of why animals look or behave certain ways.
- This story could also become a springboard for researching other insects or even animals of Africa. Africa is an immense continent with several different biomes that lends itself to a rich study of habitats and unique adaptations. Are the same kinds of spiders, insects or animals found in all parts of Africa? Why or why not? Children could be engaged in all sorts of reading and writing assignments from writing a non-fiction classbook about the animals of Africa to setting up a pseudo-travel agency where teams of children are responsible for developing the promotional materials that highlight the different regions of the continent and their specific attractions.

A Story, A Story Content Enhancement Strategies

SOCIAL STUDIES/GEOGRAPHY:

- When sharing folktales from around the world with children, make sure to bring in a world map or globe to reference as you introduce new regions. When using literature from around the world becomes a regular part of your curriculum it might even be turned into something that the children chart. For example, you might have a special puppet who introduces a piece of literature from a new region and then using cut-out paper suitcases keep track of all the different cultures or countries the class has “visited” through reading.
- When you reference a map or globe as part of your story telling it allows you to introduce other related concepts like a compass-rose, directions of North, South, East, etc, longitude/latitude, the equator, etc. Ask children to predict what they think the climate of Africa is like given its location or proximity to the equator.
- Referring to the map once again, children could be engaged in activities to think about the size of Africa and compare it to other countries like America. This activity could be used to address math standards as well e.g., how many times larger is Africa than America? Older children could be engaged in a discussion of how all of Africa is not the same just as in the U.S. the way we talk, the things we eat, the way we dress, the homes we live in, etc. vary greatly from the North to the South, from the East to the Plains to the West.
- The book could become a springboard for exploring architecture in Africa and dispelling stereotypes. While in some regions people do live in thatch dwellings in other areas of Africa there is modern buildings. Children could be engaged in trying to construct replicas of different African homes using natural materials like mud, sticks, etc. Have children explore the reasons why homes are constructed differently or from different materials. Have children “test” their dwellings against real elements of weather by placing them outside for a short period of time to have them gain an appreciation of the skill needed to build different types of African homes.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- The book could be used to introduce children to the many different artisan techniques of Africa including the use of woodcuts to make illustrations. Children could create their own design and then develop a story that goes with their picture or an entire classbook could be illustrated using woodcuts.
- Further studies could be done into the clothing and colorful Kente cloth worn by some people of Africa. What is the technique used to make Kente cloth? Could children be engaged in a weaving activity where they could gain first hand experience with this craft?
- Lifting some of the traditional foods mentioned in Anase spider stories like yams, different cooking experiences could be shared in the classroom.
- Often in African folklore tales are told orally or also with the accompaniment of instruments. Children could be exposed to this storytelling form and encouraged to create their own instruments from natural materials. For example, using a calabash that has been hollowed out and hardened to make a drum to enhance a retelling of an African folktale.

Summary of **Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain** A Tale from Kenya by Verna Aardema

Kapiti plain was always green with plenty of rain and food for all. But one year the rains were very late and soon everything was dry and the animals had not grass, nor water to drink. Kipat comes up with an ingenious way to “green up the grass, all brown and dead, that needed the rain from the cloud overhead.” This story beautifully illustrates the universal importance of rain and water and is a perfect addition to any unit on ecology or world biomes.

Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain Content Enhancement Strategies

LANGUAGE ARTS:

- This story introduces the concept of a cumulative refrain. After reading the story children could be encouraged to use this storytelling strategy to collaboratively create another story using this technique.
- There are many rhyming elements in this story that could be used to teach children the spelling and reading strategy of word families. Children could be given instruments (or make instruments) that they shake each time they hear a rhyming piece of text. Afterwards the teacher could write several of the key rhyming words on chart paper and then engage the children in brainstorming a list of other words that rhyme with those identified.
- Again, children could be encouraged to use a story map and outline the key elements of the story in order to prepare for a dramatic retelling of the story. Children could be engaged in making their own costumes or masks for the retelling by studying African masks.
- Children could create dioramas for the habitat depicted in the illustrations of the story and then do a research paper that describes the particular habitat, its vegetation, animals, rainfall, etc.

SCIENCE:

- The book nicely introduces the concept of the water cycle that could easily be extended into investigations of what happens when the cycle is disrupted. What happens to life in a particular habitat when there isn't enough water? Children could be engaged in a research project that compares this situation to what happens in other areas of the world where there is flooding or too much water.
- Experiments could be set up with simple plants where each plant is provided a different set of conditions e.g. too much water, adequate water, too little water, etc. Children could make predictions about what will happen to each of the plants and then record the changes in the plants over a period of time. This could then lead into a study of the unique adaptations that plants and animal life make in the different regions of Africa to endure periods of little precipitation.
- The illustrations of African animals could be used to prompt children to think about food chains. A game could be made out of a collection of pictures of different plants and animals found in specific African habitats and children could be encouraged to determine the order of the food chain. For older children they could be encouraged to explore the consequences of destroying certain habitats e.g., what happens when a particular animal goes extinct because its habitat has been destroyed?

Bibliography

Additional Resources for Content Enhancement of Other Stories

Juba This and Juba That: 100 African-American games for children. By Dr. D Hopson and Dr. D Hopson.

Travel the Globe: Multicultural story times. By D. Webber, D. Corn, E. Harrod, D. Norwell and S. Shropshire.

Storycraft: 50 theme based programs combining storytelling, art and crafts for children in grades 1-3. By M. Simpson and L. Perrigo.

Multicultural Teaching: A handbook of activities, information and resources. By P. Tiedt and I. Tiedt.

Shake it up Tales! Stories to sing, dance, drum and act out. By M. MacDonald.

Story Stretchers for the Primary Grades: Activities to expand children's favorite books. By S. Raines and R. Candy.

A Chorus of Cultures: Developing literacy through multicultural poetry. By A. Ada, V. Harris and L. Hopkins.

Around the World Art and Activities. By J Press.

Dancing Hearts: creative arts with books kids love. By M. Brady.

Crazy Gibberish: and other story hour stretches from a storyteller's bag of tricks. By N. Baltuck. *This is not an multicultural resource but rather ideas of how to keep children engaged during story times and may come in quite useful if you are incorporating shared readings or lengthy stories into your classroom.

Using Multiethnic Literature in the K-8 Classroom. Edited by V. Harris.*This book summarizes relevant cultural content teachers should be familiar with in order to teach about the following cultures: Afro-American, Puerto Rican, Asian Pacific, Mexican-American and Native American.

Oryx Multicultural Folktale Series—there are several collections available at your library. Each book is a series of similar folktales from around the world that share the same theme, for example, one collection is titled A Knock at the Door. Accessing one of these collections may be a nice way to compare/contrast different versions of similar stories such as using the Oryx collection of Cinderella stories and comparing it to Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters, an African Cinderella story by John Steptoe or to Yeh-Shen, the original Chinese Cinderella story.