

Tell a Tale

Purpose

Students will analyze traditional arts, including folk tales and narratives that depict the experiences of ethnic, racial, and religious groups in different regions of the United States.

Materials

For the teacher: The People Shall Continue by Simon Ortiz, *The Adventures of Spider: West African Folktales* by Joyce Cooper Arkurst
For each student: paper, pencil, colored pencils
For each group of students: research resources

Activity

A. Folk Tales

1. Introduce students to legends and folktales of American Indian cultures by reading one to the class.
2. Read *The People Shall Continue* aloud to the class.
3. Have students explain what they think the legend is describing. Clarify that it is one American Indian's view of how the American Indians came to settle the land.
4. Explain that storytellers passed on these stories orally. They created many stories to explain how things happened in the universe. Only later were they written down.
5. Read *The Adventures of Spider: West African Folktales* aloud to the class. Ask: "How are these folktales like the American Indian folktales? How are they different?" Discuss students' responses.

B. Creating Folk Tales

1. Encourage students to think of a landform or custom in their region to write a folktale about.
2. Have students write a short story about an aspect of the region or local community (e.g., physical landforms, weather patterns).
3. Encourage students to be creative and draw a picture to go with their folktale.

C. Storytelling

1. Tell students that they are going to become oral storytellers themselves. Tell them that they will choose a story to learn and then present the story as part of a class storytelling festival.

(continued)



MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Have students who need a challenge research folktales relating specifically to their own heritage. Encourage students to write a summary of one tale and explain what it taught them about their heritage.



EXTENDING THE ACTIVITY

Videotape students' presentations and make them available in the school library or share the tape with a class in another community that is studying the same theme.

Standards Links
5.3.10, 5.5.4

Activity (continued)

2. Encourage students to choose a story that explains some aspect of everyday life or of the environment (e.g., the existence of a mountain range).
3. Divide students into storytelling teams. Give each team paper and a pencil.
4. Allow students enough time to research and choose a folktale to perform.
5. Tell students that their story should say something important about the culture from which it comes.
6. Remind students that they will perform their stories so they will need to choose a story that lends itself to a dramatic reading or presentation.
7. Have each group study the story and decide how to perform their folktale.
8. Encourage students to be creative with their presentations. Some students may want to add music and props; some may be able to incorporate costumes or dance.
9. Hold the first performances in the classroom, then share the storytelling performances with other classes or family and community members.

Questions for Review

Basic Concepts and Processes

While students are working on their folktales, ask them questions such as the following:

 Why do people make up folktales?

 How were the folktales handed down from generation to generation?

 Why weren't they written down?

 Do you know of any stories that were handed down to you from another generation?