Genre Study: Traditional Literature

Multicultural Folktales/ Myths/ Legends

Teacher Resource Handout
by
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Definition of Traditional Literature:
- The body of stories and poems that came to us by oral transmission and whose authors are unknown.

Definition of Folktales:
- Relatively simple stories with sparsely drawn characters and strong plots.
- Stories that have been told aloud from people who aren’t known.

Definition of Myths:
- Text that try to explain the mysteries of the universe, in terms that are understandable to an average person.
- They answer questions such as “How did the world come to be” and “What happens after we die”.
- Sometimes it clashes with scientific explanations.

Definition of Legends:
- A story from that past that is believed by many people but can’t be proven true.
Plot Summary:
This story is told about three special trees. The three trees each dreamed about being something special one day. One wanted to be a chest, the second a ship, and the third wanted to be the tallest tree. One day lumberjacks came and cut all of them down. At first, none of them became what they wanted to be. The plot takes a turn just when you start feeling bad for the trees, they become what they always wanted to be, but in a different way. The setting of the story was around the time Christ was born. The theme of the story is that things don’t always go according to our plans, but God always has something better to give us.

Reader Response Activity:
For this story, I think that a project such as a story line would be good. It would show what the trees first wanted to be, what happened to the trees, then how they were satisfied in the end. Students can work together to think what else a tree could have became during Gods life time.
Plot Summary:
The book retells an Apache folktale that why the wind blows through the trees and where is that sound from. The story starts from a social hoop dance party for young people to get together in a valley. There are a boy and a girl dance together for the whole night and the boy says he knows how to play flute. The girl replies that she will listen while working in her father's field and she will place a leaf in the river that runs through the canyon if she likes the song. The boy plays the flute and the girl places the leaf in the river and it goes on for a few day. However, the boy has to leave for a hunting trip and he girl is so upset because she thinks the boy does not like her anymore since no one plays the flute. Soon, she passes away. The boy finds out when he is back and he goes to the place where the family bury the girl and he plays a song for her. Later, the boy is disappeared and no one knows where did he go. Now, when people heard the sound of wind blowing through the trees, the Apache tribe knows that it is the boy playing the flute. This folktale shows the theme of love and loyalty.

Reader- Response Activity:
The Apache folktale connects to the culture of Native American and it would be a great read-aloud in November, since it is the National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. The students can know more about the Native American music and watch some videos that demonstrate how the flute sounds like and connect back to the book, understand why people say "it sounds like the wind blowing through the trees" and can discuss how they would describe the sound.
Plot Summary:
This folktale takes place in Ireland with Jamie O'Rourke, the laziest man in Ireland and his hard working wife, Eileen. The plot is simple. Jamie is lazy and he let his wife to do all the work in planting the potatoes. When he wife hurts her back, he believes that he is going to starve to death. However, he catches a leprechaun and the leprechaun gives him a seed which can grow a huge potato instead of a pot of gold. The themes of helping each other and sharing show here: The people from the village help Jamie to dig up the huge potato and Jamie shares his potato with everyone. They have potato for every meal in the winter and they offer to cook for Jamie next year if he stops growing another huge potato.

Reader- Response Activity:
This read-aloud can be occur near St. Patrick's day. Since the plot is simple and suitable for young children, this book can demonstrate the story elements and story structure. Students can retell the story and work on a story map, for younger grades, we can include pictures for them to match the problem, events and solution. Or, the students can draw or write on the story map.
Plot Summary:
In this story we learn that a goat, rooster, and a donkey all wanted to grow a crop. They decided to grow clover because it is something that they all enjoy. They waited and waited for the crop to grow. One evening Donkey got impatient and ate the whole crop. The next day when Goat and Rooster saw the crop they were infuriated. Donkey lied about eating it. They decided to go to the Well of Truth to find out who was the one that ate it. The liar had to stay in the well for two months and one night. This story took place in Egypt. The theme of this story is to tell the truth, and patience is a virtue.

Reader Response Activity:
For this story I would focus on the theme of telling the truth. I would have the children get into a circle and play button button. One child stands in the middle of the circle with their eyes closed. I would have the child pass the button around until a timer stops. We would then say “button button who has the button”. The child in the middle would then have to try and guess who has the button. If the person who has the button lies and says they don’t have it is picked, they will be out. We would then discuss how when you lie it makes you feel bad, and how important it is to tell the truth.
How Tiger Got His Stripes

Told by: Rob Cleveland
Illustrator: Baird Hoffmire
Genre: Traditional Literature (multicultural)
Grade Range: Primary

Plot Summary:
In this folktale it goes into a story about how tigers came about a power minded character Tiger who had sharp fangs, claws, and a beautiful coat. He was only missing one thing...wisdom. The plot of the story is that Tiger goes out to try and get wisdom from a man. The man outsmarts him and ties him to a tree with a rope, which creates his stripes. This takes place in a jungle many years ago. This story has a few themes such as courage, fairness, and that wisdom isn’t just given to you, you learn it in time.

Reader Response Activity:
This folktale is all about how a tiger came about getting his stripes. This could make a good read aloud in a classroom about how different cultures believe things came to be. In this case a tiger and his stripes. Students could then pick an animal of their choice and create a story of how they think that animal came to be. An example, would be why a toucan has such a colorful beak. Not only would it be fun, but it would help students connect to the story.
Plot Summary:
The folktale takes place in a Chinese village where people are starving because of the drought. Hai Li Bu is a good hunter, but he can't enough food because of the weather. One day, he saves a snake from the crane and surprisingly, that snake is the daughter of the Dragon King of the Sea. In returns, The Dragon King offers him the knowledge of animals' language so he can hunt better but he cannot reveal this secret. Later on, he hears the animals saying that a huge flood is coming and will destroy the village. He asks everyone to leave but no one believes him. In order to save everyone, he decides to tell the secret, and slowly he turns into a stone. The people return to rebuild their village and they place Hai Li Bu on the top of the mountain. Since then, people in the village listen to each other. The story has the theme of hero, magic and trust.

Reader-Response Activity:
Since Hai Li Bu turns into a stone statue, let the students create their own stone statue and write a story about it. Students can also write about a time that they need to keep a secret or what wish they will ask for if they are Hai Li Bu and why.