

African and Creole Literature for Kindergarten

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Rationale

My curriculum unit will provide some experience with African and French African customs and stories through the lively medium of storytelling. The two week curriculum will immerse the class of kindergartners in the African and Creole culture by offering five stories per week for two weeks. During the weeks of hearing the various stories the students will begin to feel the enchantment with storytelling that I felt after my reading. Patrick Chamoiseau described the power of the storyteller in his introduction to *Creole Folktales*, where he says that to tell a story is: "To form and inform through the hypnotic power of the voice, the mystery of the spoken word."

These stories deserve to be "told" not just read. The teacher will need to be thoroughly familiar with each story before reading it to the class. The animation that can be used if one does not totally rely on reading from the book will reap many rewards such as the students' rapt attention and even participation as the story unfolds. When the lesson plans say "read the story" in the procedure section, it is understood that the story is read with liveliness, with gestures, and with much expression in a storytelling fashion.

This unit presents ten stories, one for each day for two weeks. The entire reading lesson and accompanying activities are intended to be completed in one hour and twenty minutes or less. Activities and enrichment suggestions are part of the ten lessons. The teacher may want to repeat a story the second day and use one or more of the activities suggested if the students especially enjoy a particular lesson.

Neighborhood

Mifflin School is a Pittsburgh Public School in a lower middle class neighborhood which is predominantly white on the outskirts of Pittsburgh. Most families who have children attending here live near the school and have lived in the area for generations. It is not a neighborhood that changes often and there is not a wide variety of students from different cultures in the school. This unit will increase awareness of other cultures. If we increase our understanding of others we will gain knowledge of ourselves.

Use of French

We have a whole language reading program in our kindergarten, which is supplemented with a separate phonics program. The whole language program is interesting to teach because of its wide range of literature. Each year we read many excellent books and stories from around the world. However, the only stories which are included in both English and a second language are always in Spanish. We read *Con Mi Hermano* in English and Spanish. "El Tragadabas" was a story in our *Read Aloud Anthology* that included an English version and a Spanish version on cassette tape.

The kindergarten students enjoy hearing Spanish, especially if they have a good understanding of the story beforehand. The students dramatized "The Terrible Tragadabas" in English and then again with many giggles while the Spanish teacher Mrs. Green read the story completely in Spanish. Due to the obvious success and enjoyment of the class and their positive responses to a second language it seems appropriate to attempt to introduce some French into our classroom. "Le Secret de Lunelle" from *Legends and Language Learning: Bringing Africa to the French Classroom* will be read in English and then again entirely in French. We will have some preparation beforehand with vocabulary and illustrations.

Geography

To kindergartners size is always impressive. No matter what we are discussing or making, bigger is always better in their opinions. Using an overhead with a transparency of an outline map of Africa and comparing it to the United States will help to create an interest in a place so much larger than ours. They will also be introduced to each country on the globe as we read a story from that area. The repetition of finding these countries on our maps or globes each day begins to cement in their minds the position of other countries in relationship to the United States. Hearing the names of the countries while we find them on the map will help us become familiar with their odd-sounding names.

Participation

Student participation is an integral part of the success of the stories. Many of the stories are included because they lend themselves to singing, dancing, drama, sound effects and oral responses. The stories must be told in a lively way using gestures, props, surprise, different cadences and sound levels, change of pace and much interaction with the audience. At this age (five or six usually) the students should not be expected to sit quietly and listen to any story no matter how enthralling for longer than twenty minutes or so. But the learning can continue through use of movement such as acting, singing, and dancing or through follow-up activities such as craft-making or drawing.

Standards

In the Pittsburgh Public School District, we are guided by communications and mathematics standards. This curriculum unit satisfies a number of those standards. The communications standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening are included in the back of this unit and will be referred to by number at the beginning of each lesson.

Lesson One

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Locate Africa on the globe
2. Describe Anansi and the other characters
3. Retell this story
4. Demonstrate listening comprehension
5. List the three tasks given to Anansi

These objectives meet the communications standards numbers 2, 3, and 6.

Sources:

Anansi Does the Impossible by Verna Aardema

A is for Africa by Ifeoma Onyefulu

Materials

Paper and crayons, pipe cleaners, marshmallows, and whole cloves, a map which includes Africa and the United States (an overhead projector with a transparency map would be best) or a globe.

Procedure

1. Prepare the class and develop interest and background by:
 - a. Locating Africa on an overhead map projection or globe, making a *comparison between the United States and Africa, and pointing out the*

- size of each*
- b. Displaying the book *A is for Africa* and allowing the children to peruse the pictures
 - c. Asking for predictions.
What could this story be about?
Who do you think Anansi is?
2. Read or tell the story aloud to the class.
 3. Discuss reactions.

Follow-up and Evaluation

Students respond to the literature through drawing, writing or a craft activity.
Suggested activities:

1. List a few words on the chalkboard which the students copy such as “Anansi” or the word “spider”, then have children draw a circle for the body and eight lines for his legs. Ask students to place Anansi in their favorite part of the story by drawing his surroundings.
2. Demonstrate how to make a spider from a marshmallow and eight pipe-cleaners bent to resemble legs. Use two cloves for eyes. Allow time for storytelling and playing with the spiders.

Lesson Two

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Act out the Anansi tale of today
 2. Compare today’s story with the story from lesson one
- These objectives meet the communications standards 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8.

Source

“Anansi, the African Spider” from Barbara Winther’s *Plays from African Folktales*.

Materials

A rattle, a gourd, a stool, and a map or globe.

Procedure

1. Read the play.
2. Discuss the similarities to the story in lesson one.
3. Select four children to play: Anansi, Nyame the sky-god, Crocodile, and

Monkey.

(The teacher should read the storytellers' parts as well as any stage directions and can prompt the students if they do not recall the story.)

Follow-up and Evaluation

Often the children are so excited about their dramatization that they clamor to repeat it with different children playing the characters. Each reenactment becomes smoother.

Lesson Three

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate listening skills.
 2. Compare and contrast this third version of the Anansi story.
- These objectives meet the communications standards 2, 3, 5, and 6.

Source

"Why They Name the Stories for Anansi" from *Afro-American Folktales* edited by Roger D. Abrahams

Materials

Crayons, large paper for a graph, and a globe or map of Africa

Procedure

1. Read the story and discuss.
2. Review important differences in the three stories and ask for similarities as well.
3. Point out that this story originated in Africa and came to America through oral retelling.

Follow-up and Evaluation

The teacher makes a simple graph with three columns. Each column has the title of one of the Anansi stories at the top and is divided into boxes under the title. Children can color a box under the title of the story they liked the best. Then the teacher tabulates the results and reports which story was the class favorite.

Lesson Four

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate listening skills
2. Name the characters in the story

3. Retell the story
4. Respond to literature by making turtles

These objectives meet the communications standards 2, 3, and 6.

Source

“Why There Are Cracks in Tortoise’s Shell” from *African Folktales* edited by Paul Radin.

Materials

Pictures of turtles and of vultures, paper or styrofoam bowls, green construction paper, green markers or green paint, glue, and scissors.

Procedure

1. Write the words on the chalkboard, “vulture” and “tortoise”.
2. Display pictures of these two animals.
3. Discuss the type of relationship these two would ordinarily have.
4. Read the story, “Why There are Cracks in Tortoise’s Shell”
5. Discuss reactions.

Follow up and Evaluation

Demonstrate to the children how to make a tortoise. Cut out four small green feet, one head, and one tail and glue to the overturned bowl. Paint lines on the bowl to resemble the “cracks” in a turtle’s shell. Have the children retell the story while holding their turtles.

Lesson Five

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Recite French vocabulary words after the teacher
2. Listen to a story in English and then in French
3. Locate Africa on the map or globe
4. List attributes of a friend
5. List characters in the story

These objectives meet the communications standards 2, 3, 5, and 6.

Source

“Le Secret de Lunelle” from *Legends and Language Learning: Bringing Africa to the French Classroom*.

Materials

Map of Africa or a globe, drawing paper and crayons.

Procedure

1. Locate Africa on the map or globe.
2. Read the English translation of the story “Le Secret de Lunelle” using the

- visuals that are included in that story.
3. Discuss the story.
 4. Display and pronounce key French vocabulary words.
 5. Name the characters in the story, write their names on the board.
 6. Reread the story in French using the eight visuals that are part of that publication.

Follow up and Evaluation

Discuss how Lunelle must have felt, and whether we have had similar experiences. Have the class draw pictures of Lunelle and her story.

Lesson Six

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Locate Martinique on a map or globe
2. Recite a phrase in French
3. Demonstrate listening skills.

These objectives meet the communications standards numbers 2, 3, and 6.

Source

“The Most Beautiful One is Under the Tub” from *Creole Folktales* by Patrick Chamoiseau.

Materials

A puppet that looks like a parrot.

Procedure

1. Introduce the parrot puppet to the children.
2. Explain that he is one of the characters in the story.
3. Write on the board and repeat three times “Lapli bel anba la bay”
4. Explain that this is a French phrase which they will repeat to help to tell today’s story and that it means “the most beautiful one is under the tub”
5. Read the story aloud to the class and allow the children to recite the phrase with the teacher each time it comes up in the story.
6. List the names of the characters on the board.

Follow-up and Evaluation

Individual children can hold the parrot puppet and retell parts of the story with the class helping to recite the French phrase at the appropriate times.

Ask the children if this story is similar to any other story they have heard.

Compare it to the story of Cinderella.

Lesson Seven

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Locate Martinique on the map or globe
2. Demonstrate listening skills
3. Recite the names of several birds
4. Compare the behavior of the two women in the story
5. Retell this story
6. Determine why this story is a fantasy

These objectives meet the communication standards 2, 3, 5, and 6.

Source

“A Pumpkin Seed” from *Creole Folktales* by Patrick Chamoiseau

Materials

A map or globe, watercress or lettuce, pumpkin seeds, drawing paper and crayons.

Procedure

1. Put these vocabulary words on the board and go over several times with the class: “chinpontong”, “zabitan”, “watercress”, “colibri”, “sunbird”, “cici warbler”, “ragout”, “skinks”, and “mayouba”
2. Find Martinique on the globe and discuss these words that are familiar in that country.
3. Discuss fantasy versus reality and ask the children to think about whether this story could be real.
4. Look at the pumpkin seeds and handle them.
5. Have the children taste a piece of the watercress.
6. Read the story aloud to the class.
7. Discuss reactions to the story.
8. Compare the two women in the story and discuss why their outcomes were so different.

Follow-up and Evaluation

Have the children name some things which are real and some which are pretend.

Make two lists on the board. Ask the children to fold a paper in half and to make something real on one side, something of fantasy on the other.

Another activity would be to draw the first old lady on one side of the folded paper and the other old lady on the other. Give the children a chance to display their art work and to describe the two old women.

Lesson Eight

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Locate Martinique on the map or globe
 2. Demonstrate listening skills
 3. Explain why this story is fantasy or reality
 4. Name the three obstacles to the little boy in the woods
- These objectives meet the standards numbers 2, 3, 5, and 8.

Source

“Lil’ Fellow the Musician” from *Creole Folktales* by Patrick Chamoiseau

Materials

An inexpensive flute or whistle or piece of bamboo, drawing paper and crayons, glue, markers, buttons, scraps of material, and yarn or string.

Procedure

1. The teacher prepares the class and develops interest and background by:
 - a. Locating Martinique on the globe or have children do so
 - b. Discussing obeying our parents versus disobeying and what are our experiences
 - c. Describing the little boy in the story as a willful child who could play the flute very well which got him out of most troubles
 - d. Asking the children to watch for three creatures in the woods
2. Read the story aloud to the class.
3. Discuss their reactions.
4. List the three creatures and give some of the author’s vivid description
 - a. A horse with huge horns
 - b. A dragon, who was a calamity of flesh, scales, horny hide, and flickering flames
 - c. A seven-headed beast with fourteen eyes of lightning and thunder, teeth of needles, a tail wrapped seven times around his belly and a dab of grease for a heart.

Follow-up and Evaluation

Allow the children to discuss the three creatures in the woods and to use descriptive words. Then give them paper, glue and the materials listed above to create their own creatures.

Another day the children could recreate this story, acting out the part of the boy playing the flute and disobeying his parents, and the three other creatures.

Lesson Nine

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Locate Haiti on the map or globe
2. Name the characters in the story
3. Sing the simple tune to the story
4. Reenact the story

These objectives meet the communications standards 2, 3, and 8.

Source

“Owl” from *The Magic Orange Tree* edited by Diane Wolkstein

Materials

Construction paper cut in shapes to resemble feathers, glue, crayons and drawing paper.

Procedure

1. Discuss the owl and the rooster, what they look like and how they act.
2. Introduce the Creole description for the sounds that the rooster makes “kokioko”. Compare that sound to our words for a rooster’s call.
3. Play on the piano or sing or both the simple tune in the back of this book
4. “Dong ga da, Dong ga da, Dong.” Allow the children to “dance” or just to move to the music.
5. Read the story aloud to the class.
6. Discuss reactions.

Follow-up and Evaluation

Children can create owl or rooster with the materials above. Then allow them to make the Creole sounds for the rooster and to move to the music which they can sing or the teacher can play.

Lesson Ten

Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Locate Haiti on the map or globe
2. Retell the story
3. Name the animals in the story
4. Demonstrate listening skills
5. Compare this story to *Rumpelstiltskin*

These objectives meet the communications standards 3, 5, and 6.

Source

“The Name” from *The Magic Orange Tree* edited by Diane Wolkstein

Materials

Pictures of a fish, an eel, a shrimp, a crab, and a copy of *Rumpelstiltskin*

Procedure

1. Locate Haiti on the globe or map and discuss the climate there.
2. Put a few words on the board from the story: fish, eel, shrimp, crab, and fwip.
3. Explain what these words mean and show pictures of the animals.
4. Read the story aloud.
5. Discuss how the story is similar to the story of *Rumpelstiltskin*.
6. Find how the stories are similar and how they are different.

Follow-up and Evaluation

Review the words we learned from the story.
Retell the story using these new words.
Reenact the story if the children enjoy it.

Communications Standards

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgements about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.

7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe.
9. All students converse, at a minimum level of “Intermediate Low,” as defined in the oral proficiency guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in at least one language other than English, including the native language if other than English.
10. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

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