

African-American Folktales: Fun Ideas to Use For Black History Month

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Unit Overview

This unit consists of African-American folktales that can be used in a first grade classroom. It is intended for use during Black History Month, but would also be suitable as an addition to a pre-existing Reading or Language Arts program. There are many activities that could also be implemented as a Social Studies, Math, Music, Science, or Art subject areas.

Black storytellers are masters of the spoken word in the true African tradition (Goss et al, 9). This unit will discuss African-American folktales, discuss their origin, history, and offer detailed lesson plans and classroom activities. This curriculum unit is designed for first graders in an urban school district. It can be used to supplement the existing Harcourt Reading Series now being used in Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Unit Rationale

“The black oral heritage is alive and growing among people of African blood...” (Goss et al, 9) Indeed, it is, and what better way to appeal to young African-American students than stories? I chose this topic for several reasons. First, I thought it would appeal to young children, since they love animals. Second, I thought it would be a fun way to improve student’s listening skills. Third, I like the idea of integrating speaking and critical thinking skills through the use of authentic African-American literature. Last, I think it will improve a child’s sense of self worth.

This unit is titled, “Fun With African-American Folktales: Listen and Learn.” It can be implemented during Black History Month one period per day, for five periods per week. It can be used in conjunction with a pre-existing Social Studies or Language Arts curriculum. The target audience is first graders, but it can also be adapted to kindergarten age students or second graders.

The reason I chose this topic is because young children enjoy listening to stories about animals. Most folktales are ‘pourquoi’ tales (why in French). These tales explain why or how an animal has acquired various physical characteristics. This unit will contain folktales that can be incorporated into various subject areas, such as Math, Science, Language Arts, Art, Music, and Physical Education. Ultimately, there are several activities that can be implemented throughout the month of February. However, if desired, they can also be used separately throughout the year in short, forty-five minute periods, or bi-monthly, if needed.

For example, for a Language Arts lesson, you could do a Shared Reading of the story, How the Ostrich Got Its Long Neck, by Verna Aardema. Then the students can create animal puppets using old socks,

paper plates, or paper bags and use them to do an oral re-telling of the story. As a Math lesson, the African tale A Story, A Story, retold and illustrated by Gail Haley, the students could count the many animals mentioned in the story. They could create a picture graph and compare the number of animals.

A stimulating Science lesson would involve the story, Monkey-Monkey's Trick, by Patricia McKissack. After hearing the story, students can research what types of food zebras, elephants, giraffes, and monkeys eat. The children can find out about the different types of habitats, where these animals live, and create models of natural animal habitats.

Using the Nigerian Folktale, Why the Sky Is Far Away retold by Mary Joan Gerson, students can create their own sky pictures or murals using crayons, paint, markers, chalk, and cotton balls for clouds. Finally, in the West African tale, Anansi and the Magic Stick, students can act out the story, move like a spider, sing "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider" fingerplay, and make spiders using pretzel sticks, marshmallows, and red licorice eyes. There is a wonderful folktale called, The People Could Fly, from the book of the same name, by Virginia Hamilton. This story contains wonderfully rich language and varied imagery about runaway slaves that escape their cruel masters and toilsome way of life by sprouting wings and flying away. Students would enjoy writing their own stories, entitled, "If I Could Fly."

This unit is appropriate to my classroom for several reasons. First, it is age-appropriate for first grade students who are six or seven years old. Second, this unit will help to stimulate a first grader's natural curiosity about animals. Third, it will appeal to my students' love of animals. Last, it will help children use their imaginations to create mental pictures about animals and improve their listening skills.

Furthermore, my students will benefit from this unit by learning more about African-American culture as well as themselves. It will help to raise a child's low self-concept, and heighten positive self-awareness in young children.

It is crucial that African-American students develop self-pride and self-love at an early age to ensure success throughout their school experience. By being exposed to African-American Art and Literature, students can become proud of their heritage, themselves, and be inspired to achieve greatness.

The History

American folktales originated with African-American people. Many were brought from Africa to the United States by force. Ripped from their native homeland, torn from their past, they had to leave all they knew behind-their families, languages, customs, and social groups. Many of the folktales they created were ones in which different animals-like the rabbit, fox, bear, or wolf-took on human characteristics.

The favorite of slave storytellers is Brer or Bruh Rabbit. He was smart, tricky, clever, and often won when facing off against bigger stronger animals. Many Americans first exposure to black folktales was through an elderly character named Uncle Remus, a slave who was in a favored position (often he worked in the house) on the plantation.

After slavery was abolished in 1856, black Portuguese fisherman emigrated from the islands to America. They, too, had a distinct history of slavery. They also brought with them their own unique folktales.

One of the most important storytellers is the historian (Goss et al., 11). Many times, in African-American folktales, they teach the history of a people long ago. Known among many people as the griot—that revered individual in the society who is entrusted with the exact cultural history (Goss, et al, 12). These people were trusted to pass on wisdom and knowledge. This is an inherited position. The Wolof people of Senegal, West Africa, call the griot a gewel. According to Dr. Pearl E. Primes, a griot must have music and song skills. Often they use music or songs to help tell a story. They may also use costumes, gestures, instruments, puppets or other props to send a message.

Some of the contemporary folklorists such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Bernice Johnson Reagon, John Roberts, and Gerald Davis are carrying on this tradition.

Folktales come from many different places and occur in a variety of forms such as stories, raps, rhymes, sermons, or poems (Barnes,10). Through folktales and African-American stories, readers can feel the pain of suffering of slavery as well as sense the love that black folks have for each other. Readers must realize that there are many other stories other than the famous Uncle Remus stories, a character created by Joel Chandler Harris (Barnes,13). I feel that as a people, African-Americans has a rich yet troubled history, one that lends itself well to language and rhythm. Pioneers in collecting and preserving the African-American oral tradition include Zora Neale Hurston, Carter G. Woodson, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Arthur Huff Fauset, and J. Mason Brewer (Goss et al, 13).

African slaves brought to the New World faced a complex aspect of cultural confrontation—the African languages (Yoruba, Igbo, Twi, Kikongo) and Western languages (French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, English (Gates, 15). Taken from their original African communities, the African slaves in North America lost their ability to speak their own native languages. Slave owners forbid slaves to speak in their own languages, and tried to domesticate them by denying them their own language, their religion, their values and belief systems (Goss et al, 15).

Those from similar tribes were separated and taken to various plantations. Strict punishments were given to those Africans who insisted on keeping their own language, called themselves by their true names, or continued to practice cultural or religious ceremonies (Gates,15). Learning to read and write was forbidden by law. Those ex-slaves who learned how to read and write wrote about gaining their

individual freedom. This is a motif in African-American literature, and can be seen in the works of Frederick Douglass and modern novelists like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison (Gates,16).

So, how could African-American people tell their own stories yet keep their own cultural identity? By merging what they could retain from their African heritage with forms they could exact from various New World cultures where they were flung (Gates,16). This oral culture was created, crafted, shared out loud, and collected (Goss et al, 17). What emerged was the act of African-American story-telling – one that changed from an isolated, Southern, rural transformation to one in a more urban setting, which changed as people continued to migrate throughout the country (Gates,17). By telling these stories, African-American culture has thrived and survived. Our hopes, dreams, fears, behaviors we wish to change, goals we aspire to all are told in stories that we live by and through.

Objectives

The objectives of this unit are to define a folktale, and provide several examples. Students will read and listen to folktales, then do several activities. I also want to improve children's speaking, listening, and reasoning abilities. I want to stimulate and sharpen a young child's curiosity, while at the same time expose them to quality African-American literature. This will include modeling good speaking, writing, listening, and thinking abilities. I want to provide interesting classroom activities for Black History Month that can be implemented in Language Arts, Math, Science, Music, Art, Social Studies, and Physical Education curricular areas. While doing this unit, I would like to help African-

American students to develop a positive self-concept, self-pride, and self-love. I know this unit will appeal to a young child's love of animals and their creativity.

Lastly, I want to provide supplemental material for existing Pittsburgh Public School curriculum.

Strategies

This unit will contain various strategies to achieve the above objectives. For students to achieve these objectives, it is necessary for the teacher to give background information about folktales. Before I begin the unit, I would explain to my students what a folktale is and then provides concrete examples. I would

let them look at some examples of folktales on their own. Then I would let them know that for the next couple of weeks we would be reading folktales. I would let them preview some books, and tell them about some of the classroom activities.

For each story, I would read the story aloud to the students. We would discuss what happened and why. Then the students would read it again in pairs, doing a shared reading. The project would come next, followed by a quick look at the author.

Then, each day, we would do another activity about the book. Each week we would do one book, followed by one activity a day. Students will write story stretchers (like a continuation of the story), explore the characters, and find out more about the author. Students will also be exposed to animal songs as well.

In addition, this unit will use comprehension strategies including questions. We will do story retellings and shared readings of the books.

Classroom Activities

Some examples of classroom activities:

1. Collages-Cut pictures from magazines to create one large picture.
2. Story Walks- Children look through the book at the pictures alone, and try to tell what's going on in the story.
3. Shared Reading-Students read the story together, alone or in pairs.
4. Read Alouds- Teacher reads the story aloud to children, with expression and emotion. (This is my favorite part!)
5. Puppet Play-students can create animal puppets out of brown paper bags, paper plates, or old socks.

6. Plays-Students can make up a play from the story and dramatize it using props as needed.
7. Reader's Theatre-Children can take turns reading aloud in round robin fashion.
8. Animal Flash Cards-Students can draw pictures of various animals from the story and use for Show and Tell.
9. Finger Plays-Students will learn little short poems about animals, to be recited aloud.
10. Animal Songs-Students will listen to and sing songs about animals.
11. Word Puzzles-Students will create or solve puzzles about animals.
12. Who Am I? Animal Riddles-Students can write their riddles about animals, give clues, and try to solve the riddles.
13. Where Do I Live? -Students can play a game-they must guess animal habitats.
14. Rhyme Time-Students must list animal rhyming words.
15. Animal Match Ups-Children can match animals and their babies.
16. Lotto Game-Children must match animal names to pictures.
17. Story Starters-Students will write a story about an animal from one of the folktales.
18. Story Extenders-Children will write an extension to the story. What would have happened next? Why?
19. Word Building Fun-Children will build animal words.
20. Flip Books-Students will create their own flipbooks using animal words or pictures.
21. Alphabet List Game-Kids put animals in ABC order.
22. Create an Animal Game-Students can design their own special animal.
23. Easy Cooking Activities/Animal-Themed Snacks-Students can dine on animal crackers, make edible spiders, and dine on Zebra Stew Yummy!
24. Feltboard Activities-Children can use feltboard animal cutouts to re-tell the story or to make up an animal story.

25. Various Art Activities-Paper Zebras, Cardboard Spiders, Tiger masks, etc.
26. Comprehension Questions- I will ask these during the story read aloud to check for student understanding.
27. Story Sequencing-Student tells what happened first, next, last.
28. Story Summary-Oral or written. Student will tell what happened in the story-give a summary.
29. Outdoor Fun- We can have animal relay races outdoors. (Weather permitting)
30. What Am I? Game-Students will listen to a list of clues and try to guess the animal.

Classroom Lesson Plans

This unit contains four lesson plans using the following books: How the Ostrich Got Its Long Neck by Verna Aardema, A Story, A Story by Gail Haley, Why the Sky is Far Away by Mary Joan Gerson, and Anansi and the Talking Melon by Eric Kimmel.

Lesson Plan 1

Objective: The student will be able to listen to the story, How the Ostrich Got Its Long Neck by Verna Aardema and create their own animal puppets featuring characters from the story, and then use them to do an oral re-telling of the story.

Materials: Socks or paper plates, brown paper bags (lunch box size) construction paper, craft sticks.

Anticipatory Set: Ask students to describe what an ostrich is and what it looks like. Ask them if they know why the ostrich has a long neck. Tell students they will hear a story that will tell them the reason why the ostrich has a long neck.

Procedure: Read the story. Be expressive-vary your voice-volume, tone, inflection, and pitch. Ask questions like, "Why do you think the ostrich did that?" After the students have listened to the story, briefly discuss how the ostrich got its long neck. (It got stretched out when the crocodile tricked him into putting his head into his mouth). Then say, "Now we are going to make animal puppets. Have all materials readily available. Demonstrate to students how to make a puppet. To make a duck puppet,

let students color a precut duck and glue it on a paper bag or craft stick. Follow the same procedure for the crocodile, elephant, and ostrich puppets.

Check For Understanding: Have selected student re-tell various parts of the story.

Wrap Up: The students use their puppets in small groups or pairs to re-tell the story.

Lesson Extension: Let students make up their own story using their puppets.

Lesson Plan 2

Objective: The students will listen to the book, *A Story, A story* by Gail Haley and complete a picture graph to compare and contrast the animals.

Materials: Posterboard or chalkboard, chalk, crayons, markers, pointer, animal pictures, chart paper.

Anticipatory Set: Ask students, "How many animals can you name? Write responses on the chalkboard or on chart paper. Then tell them, "Today we are going to read a story about many different animals."

Procedure: Read the story. When finished ask students to name all the animals in the story. As they name each, write the animal names on a prepared graph made from poster board or chart paper. Hang the corresponding animal picture below the animal name on the graph. Have students count the number of animals in the story. Then write the numbers on the picture graph.

Check For Understanding: Ask students, "How many animals were there in the story?" "How do you know?" "What types of animals are in the story?" Guide them to understand why we use graphs to classify information.

Wrap Up: Have kids talk about their favorite animal from the story or their favorite part of the story. Serve an animal-themed snack such as animal crackers or gummy animal candy.

Lesson Extension: Have several other animal books on hand. Let students look at pictures and discuss how they look, where they live, what they eat, etc. Students can also draw a picture of their favorite animal and put them together in a class book

Lesson Plan 3

Objective: The student will listen to the story, *Why the Sky is Far Away*, retold by Mary Joan Gerson, and be able to create their own sky picture or classroom sky mural.

Materials: Crayons, watercolor paint or light blue tempera paint, markers, cotton balls, glue, long white butcher paper, paint brushes, old shirts to use as smocks, newspaper.

Anticipatory Set: Ask students about the concept of near and far. Ask them if the following items are near or far: the sun, the earth, the moon, the stars, and the sky. Ask them if they know why the sky is so far away. Tell them you are going to read a story that tells why the sky is so far away.

Procedure: Read the story, emphasizing how the sky looks and its general proximity to the land. (At first, the sky was close to the earth, however, later on in the story, it moves far away).

Discuss the story, asking questions like, “Why did the sky move?” “How did you know?” “What do you think the author is trying to say?” Tell students that they will make their own version of the sky using paint, chalk, and cotton balls. Spread newspaper out on the floor. Place the butcher paper on the floor. Let some students paint the sky and some put on the cotton balls for clouds.

Check for Understanding: Ask students to re-tell the story from the sky’s point of view.

Lesson Extension: Let students write in their journal why they think the sky is blue. Let them share their writings in the Author’s Chair. (A big chair labeled and decorated with ribbons).

Lesson Plan 4

Objective: After hearing the story, Anansi and the Talking Melon by Eric Kimmel, the student will be able to assemble their own edible spiders. They will create their own paper plate spiders to be used in the finger play, “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider.”

Materials: Chinese noodles, large marshmallows, and mini M&M’s, red licorice laces, small paper plates, wet paper towels.

Anticipatory Set: Ask students if spiders talk. Tell them today you will read a story about a very smart spider that is clever and also plays a trick on his friends.

Procedure: Read the story, stopping each time Anansi meets an animal friend. Discuss how Anansi is clever in the end. Each child gets one small paper plate with one large marshmallow, two mini M&M’s, two short pieces of red licorice laces, and eight Chinese noodles. Stick four Chinese noodles on each side. Put the two licorice laces on top for the antennae, and the two M&M candies for the nose. As you make the spider, talk about what they look like. Let students enjoy the spiders after they make them. Delicious!

Check For Understanding: Ask students how Anansi changed from the beginning of the story until the end of the story.

Wrap Up: Talk about other stories where the characters played tricks on each other.

Lesson Extension: Have students rewrite the story. Change the ending, or add additional characters. Or, make paper plate spiders. (See appendices)

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Student Resource Books

Aardema, Verna. How the Ostrich Got Its Long Neck. New York: Scholastic, 1995.

This story talks about the adventures of ostrich and his friends. Once ostrich had a very short neck. But one day, crocodile woke up with a terrible headache. What happens next will delight readers of all ages.

Aardema, Verna. Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears. New York: Dial Books, 1975. In this delightful African tale, Mosquito tells iguana a tall tale that sets off a chain reaction that ends in jungle disaster.

Aardema, Verna. Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1981. This story includes rhythmic language that describes the rainstorms in an African village.

Gerson, Mary Joan. Why the Sky is Far Away. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1972. A Nigerian folktale that tells why the sky was once so close to the earth. It contains beautiful imagery and rich, striking artwork.

Haley, Gail E. A Story, A Story. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1970. An African storyteller talks about Nymae, the Sky god and how stories really came to be.

Hamilton, Virginia. The Girl Who Spun Gold. New York: The Blue Sky Press, 2000. This delightful story is about a girl who spins real gold thread.

Kimmel, Eric A. Anansi and the Magic Stick. New York: Holiday House, 2001. Anansi the Spider is back and he has a stick that does magic. Read the book and find out what kind!

Kimmel, Eric A. Anansi and the Talking Melon. New York: Holiday House, 1994. Once again, Anansi the spider outsmarts the other animals with his tale of the talking melon. (Portrayed as huge cantaloupes in the story). Great, colorful illustrations grace the pages.

McKissack, Patricia C. Flossie and the Fox. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1986. A young girl meets a sly fox on a walk in the woods. Great conversation.

McKissack, Patricia. Monkey-Monkey's Trick. New York: Random House, 1988. This silly monkey plays tricks on all the animals.

Ringold, Faith. Tar Beach. New York: Crown Publisher's Inc., 1991. A girl imagines a trip in her mind.

Teacher Resources-Books

Balouch, Kristen. Listen to the Storyteller- A Trio of Musical Tales From Around the World. New York: Penguin Group, 1999. This book contains stories from the Caribbean, the North American Plains, and the Celtic Highlands.

Barchers, Suzanne I. Multicultural Folktales: Reader's Theatre for Elementary Students. Colorado, Teacher Ideas Press, 2000. This book features folktales for grades one through five, from England, Japan, Finland, and Russia.

Braren, Loretta. The Little Hands Art Book. Vermont: Williamson Publishing, 1994. What a great resource! Provides paper, glue, paint, marker, crayon, clay, dough, and recycled items for art projects. Idea for children ages 2-6 years old.

Check, Laura. Little Hands Paper Plate Crafts-Creative Art Fun for 3-to-7 Year Olds. Vermont: Williamson Publishing Company, 2000. This is a great tool that has several interesting art activities using paper plates of all sizes.

Dance, Cumber, Ed. From My People-400 Years of African-American Folklore. New York: W.W. Norton and company, 2002. This book tells a complete history of slavery and its aftermath. It also focuses on African-American Folklore.

Dorson, Ricahrd M., Ed. African Folklore. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1972. A great wealth of folklore from Africa, and the origins of folklore.

Feldman, Jean. Transition Time-Let's Do Something Different! Maryland: Gryphon House, 1995. This book is an awesome reference that has songs, games, rhymes, and raps to ease transitions in the classroom.

Forte, Imogene. April: Patterns, Projects, and Plans To Perk Up Early Learning Programs. Tennessee: Incentive Publications, Inc., 1990. Includes activities on rainy day fun and Easter.

Goss, Linda, and Barnes, Marian E. Talk That Talk: An Anthology of African-American Storytelling. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989. This work has wonderful stories about African customs, families, animals, etc.

Hamilton, Virginia. The People Could Fly. New York: Random House, 1985. I love this book! Newberry Award winning author Virginia Hamilton includes folktales and trickster tales, including the great fantasy folktale, "The People Could Fly."

Hauser, Jill Frankel. Wow! I'm Reading! Vermont: Williamson Publishing Company, 2000. Tips on improving pre-reading skills for Pre-Schoolers and Kindergartners.

Henry, Sandi. Cut-Paper Play!-Dazzling Creations From Construction Paper. Vermont: Williamson Publishing Company, 1997. A wonderful array of art ideas using construction paper.

Kohl, Mary Ann F. The Big, Messy Art Book. Maryland: Gryphon House Publishing, 2000. A delightful concoction of recipes for messy fun, including Goop and all types of Play Dough.

Kohl, MaryAnn, and Potter, Jean. Science Arts-Discovering Science Through Art Experiences. Washington: Bright Ring Publishing, 1993. Science activities for the very young.

Ollivier, John J. The Wisdom of African Mythology. Florida: Top of the Mountain Publishing, 1994. This collection tells wise words of African wisdom and discusses African myths as well.

Overend, Jennifer L. Arts and Crafts for Little Hands. North Carolina: The Education Center, 1995. This book shows hands-on art activities for grades Pre-Kindergarten and first. (Tracing, cutting, gluing, painting, coloring, drawing) It includes seasonal arts and crafts and some good to use anytime of the year.

Sanders, Nancy I. A Kid's Guide to African-American History. Illinois: Chicago Review Press, 2000. A history guide for study and teaching of juveniles ages-9-14. From ancient Africa, 3100 B.C. to Martin Luther King's holiday celebration in 1986.

Sierra, Judy. Multi-Cultural Folktales for the Feltboard and Reader's Theatre. Arizona: Oryx press, 1996. These tales from Spain, Ireland, Indonesia, China, and the Philippines. This book includes patterns for felt puppets.

Totter, Herman L. and Brown, Risa W. Culturally Diverse Library Collections for Children. New York: Neal Schuman Publishers, Inc., 1994. This is a good resource for various types of children's literature, for ages 3-10.

Music for Classroom Use

Compact Discs

Cathy Fink and Mary Marxer, "A Cathy and Marcy Collection for Kids"-Songs include "Susie and the Alligator," "Ten Cats Down," "A Flea and a Fly in a Flue," "Buffalo Gals," "Mr. Rabbit"

Cassette Tapes

"Disney's Silly Songs"-Songs include "Three Little Fishes," "Baby Bumblebee," "Little Bunny Foo Foo," "When I See An Elephant Fly"

"Hap Palmer-Learning Basic Skills Through Music-Volume 1"-Songs include "The Elephant," "The Birds"

"Songs About Insects, Bugs, and Squiggly Things"-Songs include "Patty's Pet Python," "Make a Snake," "Spunky Spider"

"Laughing Waters-An Album for Young Imaginations"-Songs include "Alfred the Hog," "Abiyoyo," "On the Wings of Horses," "Jabberwocky"

Sweet Honey in the Rock, “All for Freedom” - Songs include “Horse and Buggy,” “Juba,” “Down in the Valley,” “Two by Two”

“Songs and Games For Fours”-Songs include “Animal Hop” and “Living at the Zoo”

Web-Sites

Scholastic.com –A great resource for African-American books.

Appendices

To make paper plate spiders you need white craft glue, small white paper plates, black construction paper, black markers or black crayons, long pieces of string, and child safety scissors. Cut the construction paper into eight long strips. Fold the paper accordion style, back and forth onto themselves for the legs. Poke two holes in the center of the paper plate, then thread string through. Glue the spider legs around the edge of the plate. If you want, glue two pop-up eyes on top of the plate. Use black marker or black crayons to color the paper plate for the body of the spider. Dangle spider from the string.

For even more spider fun, read or recite “Little Miss Muffet.” Or read other Spider books like Miss Spider’s Tea party or Miss spider’s ABCs.

Standards

Communication Standards

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 use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of 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 the 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 communicate appropriately in business, work, and other applied situations.

Mathematics Standards

1. All students use numbers, number systems, and equivalent forms (Including numbers, words, objects and graphics) to represent theoretical and practical situations.
2. All students compute, measure, and estimate to solve theoretical problems, using appropriate tools, including modern technology such as calculators and computers.
3. All students apply the concepts of patterns, functions and relations to solve theoretical and practical problems.
4. All students formulate and solve problems and communicate the mathematical processes used and the reasons for using them.
5. All students understand and apply basic concepts of algebra, geometry, probability and statistics to solve theoretical and practical problems.

6. All students evaluate, infer, and draw appropriate conclusions from charts, tables, and graphs, showing the relationships between data and real-world situations.
7. All students make decisions and predictions based upon the collection, organization, analysis and interpretation of statistical data and the application of probability.

Compiled by the Pittsburgh Public Schools Unit of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

“African-American History Rap” by Sharon Jordan Holley

I say A B C D E F G

African-American History

H I J K L M N O P

African-American History

Q R S, T U V

African-American History

W X Y and Z.

This is a story all about me:

A is for African-American,

My true identity.

B is for Benjamin Banneker,

Surveyor of Washington, D. C.

C is for my community, A place that I call home.

D is for all the discoveries

I made just on my own.

E is for education

We use from day to day.

F for all the families

And the love that they portray.

G for all the talents and gifts

Of those who entertain.

H for the writers-Hughes and Hurston-

Who wrote about the people plain.

I for rhythm, blues, and jazz

And all our instruments.

J for Jesse Jackson

Who ran for president.

K for Martin Luther King

We honor with a holiday.

L for the cowboy, Nat Love,

“Deadwood Dick’ they say.

M for madam C.J. Walker

A black woman millionaire.

N for the prophet Nat Turner

A freedom fighter who dared.

O for oppression that we must fight

To keep our struggle alive.

P for the principles some have held

That fill our hearts with pride.

Q for the questions that I ask

About my history.

R for religion

Islam to Christianity.

S for the seven days

Of the Kwanzaa celebration.

T for Harriet Tubman,

Conductor on Freedom's station.

U for the Underground Railroad,

A secret passageway.

V for the values that make me strong

From unity to faith, I pray.

W for Woodson, Carter G.,

A vision he did see

When he proclaimed February

For Black history.

X for the name that Malcolm took

Because it means unknown.

Y for You-to be all you can

From the first day you are born.

Z for zenith, the highest point

In this universe.

You're reaching up

When you learn

An African-American History verse.

I say A B C D E F G

African-American History.

H I J K L M N O P

African-American History.

Q R S, T U V

African-American History

W X Y and Z.

This is a story all about me.

This is a story all about me.

This is a story all about me.

You could use this verse as an introduction to study African-American history, or to read to students. It has such rhythm to it, it just rolls off the tongue. Older students could mime the rap or do a dramatic interpretation. Or, research information on some of the famous African-American mentioned in the rap. This rap was found in the book, Talk that Talk, edited by Linda Goss and Marian E. Barnes.

Proverbs and Other Memorable Sayings

If you move, you lose.

Silence is golden.

You run your mouth, I'll run my business.

Spare the rod and spoil the child.

To climb a tree, you have to start at the bottom.

You have to crawl before you walk.

Fruit don't fall far from the tree.

Robbing peter to pay Paul.

It's six in one hand and a half-dozen in the other.

The sun's gon' shine in my door someday.

No matter how far a stream flows, it never cuts off from its source.

No fool, no fun.

Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies.

Don't measure my bushel by your pint.

You can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink' you can send a fool to school but you can't make him think.

These sayings were taken from the book, From My People-400 Years of African-American Folklore, edited by Daryl Cumber Dance. I picked them because I thought students might enjoy hearing more twists of the tongue. Plus, the language is both literal and figurative-it will get them thinking. For younger students, I would read a saying or two a day, and discuss them. They could write the saying and illustrate it. For older students, I would let them explain what the sayings mean, and ask them if they have heard them before.