

A Survey of African Folktales

Melissa A. Pearlman
Peabody High School

Overview

Rationale

Objectives

Strategies

Classroom Activities

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Appendices-Standards

Overview

In this unit, students will learn the characteristics of various types of African folklore. They will specifically learn about these types of folklore through reading African examples of these genres. From there, students will examine traces of these tales as they appear in African American folklore. The folklore that was narrated during slavery will be analyzed as social commentary. Further, students will demonstrate the knowledge they have gained reading the various types of folklore through written products, possible multimedia products and oral presentations. Students will then trace the patterns and characteristics of this genre as it pertains to several African American writers.

Currently I work at Peabody High School, a comprehensive high school in the Pittsburgh School District. I envision teaching this unit to 11th grade gifted/honors students. The curriculum focuses on American Literature and materials from the Advanced Placement Language and Composition exam. The course provides enriched and specially designed instruction that continues to include an inquiry and problem solving approach to learning.

Peabody is located in the East End neighborhood of Pittsburgh. In 1911, Peabody became the first district high school where children from East Liberty could attend high school. The school was named in honor of Dr. Benjamin H. Peabody, a local physician who had served as a surgeon in the Union Army before moving to Pittsburgh.

Over the years, the school attempted to meet the needs of a growing student population and underwent two major renovations, one in 1925 and the other in 1975. Today, the facility houses approximately 700 students. Our student body is comprised of 92% African American and 8% other. The school serves the

communities of the East Liberty, Larimer, Highland Park, Friendship, Bloomfield, Garfield, Morningside, Lawrenceville, Shadyside and Stanton Heights.

Already a component of the curriculum is Zora Neale Hurston's, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. For several years, I have been teaching this novel with excerpts from Hurston's novel *Mules and Men*. This piece is a collection of tales that Hurston collected while researching African American narratives in the mid 1920's. I use these pieces to introduce the concept of storytelling and dialect to my students, both issues that are prevalent in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In the past I have not focused enough time or discussion on the history of tales like Brer Rabbit or Uncle Remus. I have failed students in providing them with a stronger history and foundation for where these stories truly originated.

Additionally, I have found that these two issues are ones that students seem to struggle with when examining the novel. There is an immense amount of African American dialect in most of Hurston's work and it is important for me that students not stumble through the language and allow this to perhaps interfere with the content, theme and symbolism so heavily used in Hurston's work. Hurston is also a storyteller. She captures the attention of her readers by crafting tales that were once narrated to her by local members of her hometown of Eatonville, Florida.

I have always attempted to explain folklore by using the term folklife. The idea helps students to understand that the way a group or culture of individuals shares stories, art, dance, music, food, etc. By defining the word *lore* as wisdom, teachings, knowledge and experience of a particular group, students tend to see the ideas as comprehensive rather than just a compartmentalized topic in English class. As New York folklorist Ben Botkin wrote in 1938:

Every group bound together or by common interests and purposes, whether educated or uneducated, rural or urban, possesses a body of traditions which may be called its folklore. Into these traditions enter many elements, individual, popular, and even "literary," but all are absorbed and assimilated through repetition and variation into a pattern which has value and continuity for the group as a whole.

(Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston, Valerie Boyd)

For this unit I would like to expand on Hurston's use of storytelling by infusing early African folktales by tracing the roots of this genre from West African

folktales. It would be my goal for students to understand the true history of Hurston's work and closely examine other tales that contributed to her work.

Students tell stories. My students narrate verbal tales of magical wonder, most often intertwined with the adventures of their lives. As tellers, whether directed to me or not, the tales are detailed descriptions of their everyday lives. These are lives that are not always easy or without struggle. As a listener, I construct such meaning from their social deprivation and struggle. So much so that I began to question and investigate the nature of African American storytelling as a genre. A genre that can move away from popular culture and begin to explore stories, narrative tales that made their culture by simply retelling tales.

Rationale

Throughout the 20th century, scientists searching for the origins of the human race have turned to the distant past of Africa. The earliest members of the human race made their home in Africa about 150,000 years ago and gradually spread to the rest of the globe. Students will examine the evolution of storytelling with this same pattern. Whether Africa is considered the single starting point of contemporary humanity or merely one among several, its central importance in human history is beyond dispute.

The African slave trade did not simply begin with the English colonists but centuries earlier, when Arabs and various other African and European peoples forced blacks into servitude. Eventually, European sugar planters in the Caribbean and South America began to import large number of black slaves; men and women who were deprived of their human rights, forced to live in deplorable conditions. Early North American colonists relied on indentured servants (poor whites who traded years of labor for passage to American) and black slavery grew slowly. At first, blacks and whites worked side by side. Then in the late 1600's, white immigration dropped sharply, and planters began to acquire black slaves. By 1710 the southern colonies had developed thriving plantations, largely supported by slave labor. In 1770 with the Boston Massacre led by Crispus Attucks, 5,000 African Americans served in the Revolutionary War. And with the close of the war in 1783, the United States came into being.

Arna Bontemps in her forward to *The Book of Negro Folklore* states:

...Negro folklore, like almost any other kind, can be traced in its origins to a dim past when it drew on a common cultural heritage, which most of the folk of the world appear to have shared. In any case, the telling of tales is a time honored custom in Africa. By

what steps the FABLES OF AESOP (Ethiop) became the animal stories of West Africa, of the West Indies, and of the slave states of the U.S.A. is a lively question but not to the point here. What does concern us is that the slaves brought with them to the New World their ancient habit of story telling as a pastime, together with a rich bestiary. (viii)

To understand the ancestry, it only makes sense to expose students to more than the issues of plot, dialect and narrative structure. Bontemps continues to discuss that during slavery masters attempted to eradicate the original tribal languages used to narrate these stories. The tales then evolved to become “projections of personal experiences and hopes and defeats in terms of symbols appears to have gone unnoticed” (viii).

Folklore can also be presented as a contributing factor to the abolition of slavery. Most African American tales are about power relations, but as power relations are contextual, so are interpretations of the tales. Students familiar with slavery and willing to take metaphoric leaps will be able to read the John and Old Master tales and the animal stories as critiques of slavery and, more generally, a racist society. But it is important, too, to think of the range of meanings the tales might hold for tellers and listeners in various social positions at various historical moments.

In Uncle Remus, Bre'r Rabbit is the outstanding trickster while Hare or Little Hare appears in this role in East Africa and among the Jukun and Angass of Nigeria. Tortoise, who is the primary trickster among the Yoruba, Edo, and Ibo of Nigeria and is found as a trickster of secondary importance in many parts of West Africa and in East Africa, is the primary trickster in Cuba. Spider, the animal trickster in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the gold Coast, is known by his Twi name, Anansi, in Jamaica and Dutch Guiana and is referred to as Aunt Nancy by the Gullah of South Carolina. "Among the Yoruba, the deity ECU often appears in tales in a role similar to that of tortoise..."(Funk & Wagnalls, pg.18)

Adding to the genre is the use of *trickster tales* and *preacher tales*. In the past, students have greatly enjoyed the humor and entertainment that these tales seem to offer. The classification of these tales is important for the concrete understanding of these tales. For example, understanding why the idea of mocking the slave and the master was appropriate. When life was so dreadful on the plantations, humor was used as a way of poking fun at the master as well as the slave. The best-known type of African folktale is the animal-trickster tale. In Bantu Africa (East, Central, and southern Africa) and the western Sudan, the trickster is the hare; in West Africa, the spider (Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone) or the tortoise (Benin, Nigeria).

In most African American tales, the heroes were mostly the jackal, the hare, the tortoise, and the spider. If one is to make comparisons to folktales told in America, comparisons can be made to the jackal replacing or surviving the American fox. While the African hare replaced the American rabbit, and the African tortoise replaced the dry land sometimes slower turtle. American slave tales told by African Americans portray the hero as Brer Rabbit; representing him as the most frightened and helpless of creatures. It is difficult to trace these characteristics to the hero-animals found in African tales. These characters are all portrayed as solid sturdy characters. These tales created by slaves gave Brer Rabbit other worthy characteristics. He was a jokester, comical and always able to beat out the bigger, stronger animals. The theme of the weak overcoming the strong in most circumstances can be directly connected to the lives these story tellers were living.

Brer Rabbit was first introduced to the American masses in the Uncle Remus stories told by Joel Chandler Harris. Harris gathered the dialect tales he had heard in his childhood told by slaves. He placed them within a narrative context that made the tales available to a large white audience, sharpening the effects of their regional details and the age-old wisdom by which the enslaved secretly outwit their masters. Through his work with the Uncle Remus tales, he introduced Americans to the basic patterns and rhythms of southern African-American speech. Because of Harris' accomplishments, American mainstream literature featured a memorable new character, Uncle Remus, as well as a new literary tradition.

In most of Harris' stories, relationships are important; they develop between the audience and the narrator who acts as best friend who occupies his time with a seemingly endless supply of tales. The lasting impression of the Remus stories on readers of all ages and from many countries stems from the force of their slave lore. As a result, Uncle Remus goes back in time to African models, as well as to the animal tales of Aesop and Chaucer. Harris helped inspire other writers in the vernacular through his skillful use of narrative forms, his excellent ear for the subtleties of dialect, and his ability to emphasize the universal nature of these classic standoffs between the weak and the powerful.

Harris' work is an excellent example to introduce students to the concept of African American Folklore as a social commentary to slavery. His works are also a strong use of dialect and emphasize the linguistic patterns of the African American vernacular. An excellent tale to begin with is "How Mr. Rabbit is too Sharp for Mr. Fox." In this tale Uncle Remus is talking of the relationship of Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox in an effort to understand why they are friends. (See Appendix B)

“How Mr. Rabbit is too Sharp for Mr. Fox” is an illustration of the struggle for dominance and the fight for subordination. Most of the research indicates that Harris’ goal was to simply preserve the tradition of story telling from the old South. However, there is a clear parallel between these tales and the social dynamic of slavery. During the antebellum period, slaves might have told a version of this tale in order to document their domination and subordination by whites through the institution of slavery. In the Reconstruction era, when Harris was compiling the tales, the story also had resonance in showing the social instability of a society that could no longer rely on the institution of slavery to maintain social boundaries. It is interesting to encourage this discussion with students in an effort to allow them to make decisions as to whether Harris is just telling tales or commenting on the instability of slavery, students should make an informed decision.

Another tale that is found in *Legends of the Old Plantation* by Harris is “Why the Negro is Black.” This tale is an example of the why tales that are often found within this genre. The stories provide humorous explanations for just about anything. Hurston also provides a similar tale in *Mules and Men*, entitled “Why Negroes are Black.”

Harris’ tale is not at all about the adventurous mishaps of Uncle Remus but rather about the evolution of the African American race (see Appendix C). The story begins when the young boy questions Uncle Remus as to why the palms of their hands are white. Uncle Remus then goes on to explain that all of the races were black at one time, however, by people dipping their entire bodies into a pool of dirty or unclean water, many of the blacks were able to become white. He explains the existence of mulattos and other ethnicities by saying that mulattos were only able to dip part of their bodies into the pool and that the Chinese dipped their hair into the water in order to straighten it.

The story is significant because it disregards the idea of racial inferiority being that all people came from the same origin at one time. It could also be viewed as rather controversial in the fact that it is disparaging to Uncle Remus’ intellect. The discussion is worthwhile and affords students the opportunity to enhance their overall understanding of this period of history.

In addition to the Brer Rabbit tales, are those stories that held an overwhelming theme of the *trickster*. In slavery this jokester was often called John or Jack and existed in a quickly developed setting. This main character was always surprised and caught by Ole Master or even the devil. It became his task to avoid danger by displaying clever wit or sarcasm.

A whole gallery of children's-story heroes, from Kim's animal friends in Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books* and Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit, to Howard Garis's Uncle Wiggily and A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh, were influenced by Harris's creation of street-smart, recognizably human animal characters who speak "de same ez folks." Walt Disney's pioneering film that first combined live action and animation, *Song of the South* (1946), Disney World's Splash Mountain theme ride, an endless array of Saturday morning cartoon tricksters, from Bugs Bunny to the Road Runner, and even B&G Foods' Brer Rabbit Molasses were born, bred, or otherwise cooked up in Brer Rabbit's briar patch.

The structure of these tales is important as well. These tales do not always have one single author or that many works were transcribed and often written from the oral tradition. This can be explained by the sounds of animals in dialogue, for example, and the retort that concludes the tales of John stealing Old Master's livestock. These tales can also display the style of an individual performer's style and emphasis. Some tales seem to show the fingerprints of the collectors. It would be useful for students to look for evidence of both the performers and the collectors in the published texts.

Zora Neale Hurston's book *Mules and Men* is a book of Negro folklore and is an invaluable piece of cultural history. This book contributes to the knowledge of the inner life of Southern blacks. In order to collect these folktales she moved back to Eatonville, Florida. The townspeople of Eatonville are direct descendants of slaves and at the time, most of the townspeople have never been outside the state of Florida. Eatonville is a tract of land that was purchased for the freed slaves by Samuel Eaton of Hartford, Connecticut.

In her book, *Mules and Men*, Hurston writes about the Southern Negro's reactions to everyday events, their emotional life, their humor and their passions. The title of the book, *Mules and Men*, describes the black woman's place as a mule—a beast of burden. This theme is also replicated in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as well. This book includes many animal tales, stories of race relations, religious tales and voodoo practices. She uses the black dialect of the South when relating these folk tales. The story-telling sessions, or "lies," were usually held on the porch of Joe Clark's store on the main street of Eatonville.

Some of the "lies" are centered around the exploits of a folk hero, John. John is a slave figure who appears in a variety of situations which allow him to display cunning wit which enables him to overcome his enemies. John's master underestimates his cunning. His seeming humility and obedience allow him to pit himself successfully against stronger opponents

In one tale John's horse is slaughtered by his master because of a rumor that he had been mistreating the horse. Pretending to accept this injustice, John, who is a fortune teller, skins the horse, cures its hide, wraps it around a stick, and goes about telling people the hide can tell fortunes. Playing on the superstitions of those who are willing to have their fortunes told, John becomes a rich man. John's master, not knowing the secrets of John's success, assumes he can do likewise. Consequently, he kills his own horse, cures its hide, and goes about lying to sell it for a high price. As time goes on, the master's greed, coupled with his blindness to John's tricks, lead to his death. John's revenge is complete.

Many of the folktales in *Mules and Men* are based on Biblical situations. An example is a tale about a woodpecker on Noah's ark. The woodpecker was pecking wood while on Noah's ark. Noah warned him to stop pecking before he drilled a hole in the ark and caused it to sink. The bird continued to peck. Angered by the bird's disobedience, Noah hit him in head with a sledge hammer, and that's the reason a woodpecker has a red head today.

The possum also has an unfortunate incident on Noah's ark. Noah's son loved to play the banjo and the guitar. During the great flood, he ran out of strings. So he found the possum and shaved the hair off his tail to use for strings for his instruments. This is the reason that the possum's tail has no hair today.

In another folktale, God helps the snake, whom he made to crawl around the ground as a decoration. When men start treading on the defenseless creature God gives him poison to protect himself. He also gives him rings to rattle, as a warning that man is near. This is done so that man will not step on the snake. Only when man does not listen to the snake does the snake strike him.

One of the folktales in *Mules and Men* explains why the Negro race is black. In the beginning of time, God made people, but he did not make them completely. On certain days, he would call all the bodies together and hand out a body part. Finally, it was time to give out color. All the groups arrived but one. God sent the angels to look for them. The angels found a huge group of people asleep under the tree of life. When the angels called, they all jumped up and began to push and shove one another. Amid this chaos, God shouted "Get back! Get back!" Thinking that God was ordering them to get black, they all rushed forward and took it, and that is why the black man is black.

Zora Neale Hurston's "John Calls on the Lord" seems to reflect collaboration between storyteller and collector; here John addresses "the Lord" in language that Hurston, the daughter of a black lay preacher, heard all her life and repeated with relish in her fiction. Which tales seem most nearly quoted from the performer,

which most edited by the collector, and why? What can you tell from the texts about the collectors' attitudes toward the tellers or the interaction between collectors and tellers? How might the conditions of collecting--the historical moment, the collectors' race, and the recording technology--affect the collecting event and the published text?

Objectives

The primary goal of this unit and the research contained within it, is to expose students to the genre of African Folklore as a reputable form of literature that has existed for centuries and has been incorporated into a variety of past and contemporary writings. It is also important for students to realize the passion, depth, and intensity with which these tales are told.

Students will activate prior knowledge and relate it to specific reading of selections of folklore. Students will construct, extend, and examine meaning using strategic behaviors while reading for literary experience from a variety of texts.

It is also helpful for students to examine stories that have been retold in language that is not in the African American vernacular. In this instance students can also compare and contrast the use of language as it pertains to plot and comprehension. These tales often adhere to the traditional structure of folktales originated in Africa. Students can analyze these tales and discuss the morals or ideals that have become universal in our society.

During this unit, students will write responses to literature that develop interpretations which exhibit careful reading, understanding and insight. Students will then organize interpretations around several clear ideas, premises, or images. Finally, students will justify interpretations through sustained use of examples.

Students will analyze characterization as delineated through a character's thoughts words, speech patterns, and actions. Concurrently, students will identify and analyze recurring themes across works.

Strategies

The primary text for this unit is *Black Folktales* by Julius Lester. I chose this book because of its simplicity, availability and its style. I also found the piece to be extremely student friendly. *Black Folktales* is organized with particular regard to origins, human relationships, love, heroes and people. Within these themes there are several other books of folktales that deal with these themes.

In the Origins section Lester gives four tales “How God Made Butterflies,” “Why Apes Look Like People,” “Why Men Have to Work,” and “How the Snake Got Its Rattles.” Finding correlations between *Black Folktales* and tales by other folklorists will be an important activity for the class. Using this very simple form of survey allows students to acquire some expertise at asking questions, it also provides them with a general idea of what they are looking for before they begin.

This unit will serve as a one week unit that will serve as a series of pre-reading assignments before the reading of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston.

I see this unit’s being completed in several stages. Students will use the Internet to conduct preliminary research to gain an understanding of West African History and the background of storytelling. This method of research for students was developed after several attempts to collect folktales. The method is quite simple because students will undoubtedly meet some difficulty in getting the tales if they don’t make sure that they are looking for specific things, even though they might discover something quite different from what they expected to find. The lessons included in this plan are not designed in any particular sequence, but merely as suggested activities to acclimate students to the process of reading this genre of literature.

The unit will conclude with students reading an excerpt from Hurston’s *Mules and Men*.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1

To begin, have students work in small groups, scanning the collections of familiar folktales (copies of *Beauty and the Beast*, *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Rapunzel*, *The Owl Never Sleeps at Night*) to find some of their favorites. Have each student choose a favorite tale and share with the group why he/she selected it. Each student should then write a very brief summary of the tale, explaining the characters, setting, problem, and events of his/her favorite tale. Reporters from each group should share with the whole class the group's lists and summaries. Have the students listen for elements (motifs) that appear regularly in many of the tales.

Explain to the class that folktales from all around the world frequently use familiar motifs and elements, such as these:

- the youngest and smallest of siblings is successful after others in the family fail
- wishes are granted
- magic objects (rings, beans, or tablecloths) are standard props
- animals talk
- monsters often appear
- use of trickery
- the number three is significant (however, in Native American folktales, four is the magic number)
- use of a variety of tools
- a poor person becomes rich

Talk about *The Owl Never Sleeps at Night* (Appendix D) as an example of a tale that uses some of these recurring motifs. Animals talk. There is a monster (the troll). The owls use trickery, and the number three is significant. Have the students review their favorite folktale and identify motifs.

Share with the students the fact that folktales are usually about ordinary people and everyday life. Other general characteristics that identify a story as a folktale include these elements:

- The stories begin quickly.
- Characters are uncomplicated (flat, not round; or one-sided, not multi-sided).
- Plots move swiftly along well-trod paths.
- All questions are answered before the story ends, but there is plenty of room for flexibility within the plot, from beginning to happy ending.

These characteristics comprise the folktale formula. Have students revisit the collection of familiar folktales to see if their lists of favorite folktales fit the folktale formula. Have the students share their findings in small groups, and then lead the whole class in developing a chart of how the various stories fit the formula.

While folktales share motifs and a common formula, they can be grouped according to certain types of tales. Listed below are groups of stories distinguished by an overarching motif.

- tales of talking animals
- tales that tell why (Pourquoi tales)
- tales of magic (fairy tales)

- cumulative tales
- tales of exaggeration (silly folk and legendary figures)

Have students return to their small groups and identify as many tales as possible under each type listed above.

Distribute copies of *The Invisible Tortoise* (Appendix E). This story fits the definition of folktale because it is about ordinary people and everyday life. Does the story meet other criteria of the folktale formula? Are most of characters one-sided or flat? What quality does the hunter stand for? What about the Justice of Peace and the thief? Do these characters stand for qualities, or do they serve mainly to move the tale along? For homework, students can write an analysis to explain how this tale fits the folktale formula.

Lesson 2

Africa is a continent rich in folktales. In Africa, the tradition of telling a story orally, in a dramatic way, is alive and well. A Griot is an African storyteller who passes on African traditions and lessons by telling stories in a dramatized, exaggerated type of acting fashion.

Some definitions I will be referring to and will provide students with throughout this unit include:

MOTIF

"In folklore the term used to designate any one of the parts into which an item of folklore can be analyzed."

"Narrative motifs sometimes consist of very simple concepts which continually find their place in traditional tales."

" While the term motif is used very loosely to include any of the elements going into a traditional tale, it must be remembered that in order to become a real part of tradition an element must have something about it that will make people remember and repeat it. It must be more than commonplace."(Funk & Wagnall's,pg753.)

TYPE

" A term used by students of folk literature to designate narratives capable of maintaining an independent existence in tradition. Any tale, no matter how complex or how simple it is, told as an independent narrative is considered to be a type. Some types like the longer folktales in Grimms' collection may contain dozens of motifs, and others like the anecdotes of the animal cycle may consist of a single narrative motif. In the latter, type and motif are identical."(pg.1137)

CYCLES

"Negro folktales often occur in cycles. for example, a narrator may begin his tale with a reference to a situation from which the trickster had just extricated himself...The existence of cycles may explain the attempts of some students to read into African folktales a consistency and continuity there is no reason to expect."(pg.19)

LEGENDS

"Many Negro stories fall into the categories of legend and myth, both of which differ from the folktale in that they are looked upon as historically true."(pg.20)

MYTHS

Accounts of the activities of the gods and of the origins of natural phenomenal appear to be especially important in West Africa where a large body of mythology has been recorded. There are no comparable collections of myths from the southeastern Bantu, but Werner has been able to demonstrate the existence of mythology throughout Africa, turning to analyses of African religion where the literature on folklore was deficient. the gaps in the literature are understandable, since African myths are regarded as sacred and often esoteric."(pg. 20).

Students will be asked to generate a list of stories that have been told to them over the years from family members, friends, neighbors, etc.

As this list is completed on the board, I will encourage students to consider how these definitions adhere to the topics we have discussed.

Distribute copies of Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters by John Steptoe and read the tale aloud. Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters is a beautiful African tale that has been compared to the familiar story of Cinderella. In it, Mufaro has two lovely daughters. Manyara is cruel and self-centered, while Nyasha is sweet and kind. The king sends notice to Mufaro that the girls should come before him so that he might choose one of them for a wife. Manyara sneaks out of the village early so that she might be the first to appear before the king, ignoring a child's plea for food and an old woman's stern advice along the way. The next day, Nyasha goes with the wedding party as planned, giving food along the way to the hungry boy. Upon arriving at the king's chambers, Manyara runs out, crying that there is a monster in the room who said that he was very displeased with her. Bravely, Nyasha enters the room and sees her friend, a small snake that helped her from time to time in her garden. He transforms before her eyes and says he knows of her kindness and is pleased with her, and Nyasha becomes the queen.

The tale is from Zimbabwe and it will become apparent to the students that there is a strong rebalance to the themes found in Cinderella. Engage students in a dialogue about the similarities found in this tale and the Americanized version. It will be helpful for students to adhere to the classification system that was introduced earlier.

At this point, students will be assigned one tale from the *Black Folktales* text to read, analyze and prepare to share with the class. The manner in which you chose to have students do this is dependent on your students.

Lesson 3

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the students with the phonological deviations of the blacks living in the rural south.

Another objective is to have the students develop an appreciation and an acceptance of this dialect as a part of their rich cultural heritage.

I have noticed that, as I have been reading these folktales to my class this year my students are very uncomfortable with this dialect. They do not want to identify themselves with this dialect.

1. Teach the phonological deviations of the speech of the characters in Zora Neale Hurston's folktales.

- substitution of "d" sound for "th" sound
- substitution of "k" sound for "c" (kin)
- the double negative ("Ah know you can't make none")
- the inflection of strong verbs as if they were weak. ("throwed")
- over inflection ("All turtles loves water")
- variant use of pronouns ("and scratched he head")

2. Have students listen to one of the Brer Rabbit tales.

3. Have them jot down all the instances of black dialect that they hear.

4. Have the students discuss the words they have written down.

5. Distribute copies of *How Mr. Rabbit was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox*. Begin reading aloud and based on student comfort, ask students to continue reading.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

For Teachers

Abrahms, Roger D. *African American Folktales: Stories from Black Traditions in the New World*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

This is rather extensive anthology of African folklore. Abrahms has chosen to not use the original dialect or vernacular when retelling these tales.

Bascom, William R. *African Folktales in the New World*, 1992

In contrast to Abrahms, Bascom uses a more authentic dialect. It is helpful to compare and contrast some of the very same tales using very different narration and language techniques.

Bordelon Pamela ed., *Writings by Zora Neale Hurson from the Federal Writers Project*, 1999.

This essays examines the federal grant that was allocated to writers in the 1950's to research, analyze and discuss traditional methods of storytelling in the southern regions of Florida.

Harper, Michael S. ed. *The Collected Poems of Sterling A Brown*.

Brown's work is classic in most Black studies courses. The pieces deal with racial inequalities and struggle. The pieces on lynching are most moving.

Courlander, Harold and Ezekiel A. Eshugbayl. *Olode The Hunter and Other Tales from Nigeria*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1968.

The anthology provides very ancient tales that are primarily focused on West African culture and heritage. I found the piece most useful when talking about personification in animal tales.

Courlander, Harold. *A Treasury of Afro-American Folklore: The Oral Literature, Traditions, Recollections, Legends, Tales, Songs, Religious Beliefs, Customs, Sayings and Humor of Peoples of African American Descent in the Americas*. New York: Marlowe and Company, 1976, 1996.

A large, distinctive collection of tales, traditions, lore, legends, folk wisdom, and poetry captures the oral heritage of the peoples of Africa, including the Hausa,

Kanuri, Ashanti, Mbundu, Zulu, Hottentot, and Mensa tribes.

Dance, Daryl Cumber ed. From *My People: 400 Years of African American Folklore: An Anthology*.

The anthology offers an assortment of folklore and commentary on African-American culture by the eminent likes of Frederick Douglass, Jelly Roll Morton and Jacqui Malone and Zora Neale Hurston's. The piece is wonderful to use as a means of exposing students to Hurston's voice and style.

Davidson, Basil. *Africa in History*. Rev. ed. New York: Collier, 1991.

This book was truly a secondary reference used to provide students with a historical perspective prior to the African slave trade.

Davis, Russell and Brent Ashabranner. *The Lions Whiskers, Tales of High Africa*. Boston, New York: Little Brown and Company, 1959.

In addition to West African tales, this book is useful for collecting tales from other parts of the continent.

Dundes, Alan ed., *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, 1990

Dundes does an outstanding job of outlining the elements of humor that are so often found in some of the African tales. His analysis of the Brer Rabbit are especially useful.

Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. 5th ed. New York: Knopf, 1980.

The book traces by decade the African slave trade through the Emancipation Proclamation.

Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Myth, and Legend. New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1949.

The majority of the definitions relating to folklore are taken from this anthology. I reproduce some pages for students, while other definitions are provided in note form.

Hamilton, Virginia. *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

The 24 stories celebrate the indomitable human spirit, surviving under the most crushing circumstances of slavery. The edition that comes with a CD is most valuable because the voice of James Earl Jones is heard narrating some of the tales.

Harris, Joel Chandler, [David Borgenicht](#) and [Don Daily](#). *Brer Rabbit: From the Collected Stories of Joel Chandler Harris*. New York:Running Press Book Publishers, September 1, 1995.

An excellent anthology of some of Harris' more popular Brer Rabbit Tales.

Harris, Joel Chander. *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*. Houghton Mifflin Co; September 9, 1955.

Tales of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, Brer B'ar, Brer Wolf, and others told by Uncl Remus are gathered together in one volume

Harper, Michael S. and Anthony Walton ed. *The Vintage Book of African American Poetry*. New York: Vintage Books, A Division f Random House, Inc., 2000.

This anthology is useful for teachers and students. It is excellent at providing detailed biographical information on each writer prior to a unique selection of pieces.

Hughes, Langston and Arna Bontemps ed. *The Book of Negro Folklore*. New York: Dodd, Mean and Company, 1958.

The introduction written by both authors is extremely useful when analyzing the purpose of folklore in our society as a means of examining black culture and history. The anthology also contains a plethora of readings raging from folklore, poetry, narratives, ballads and songs.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Harper &Row, 1937.

The novel follows the fortunes of Janie Crawford, a woman living in the black town of Eaton, Florida.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Mules and Men*. York: Harper &Row, 1936.

This is a collection of black American folklore using varying accents and dialects of the Deep South (Eatonville, Florida). Hurston tells stories in an off-the-beat vocal rhythms and prodigious energy create a narrative drive that propels the

listener. She originally wrote this work as a play with Langston Hughes. They had planned to call it "Mule Bone," but the two had a falling out prior to staging the work.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Dust Tracks on a Dirt Road*. York: Harper & Row, 1937

First published in 1942, this is Zora Neale Hurston's unrestrained account of her rise from childhood poverty in the rural South to prominence among the leading artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance.

Lester, Julius. *Black Folktales*. New York: Grove Press, 1970

As an anthology of folktales this is an excellent student and teacher reference. I recommend a class set for students to peruse and read independently as well as for class discussion. The selections are classified by genre (love, origins, etc.)

Levine, Lawrence ed. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, 1977

Lawrence Levine assembles a vast collection of songs, jokes, medicine, tales, music, and humor to argue against the once widely held notion that slavery reduced blacks to a state of hopeless degradation, completely dissipated their African heritage, and left them largely dependent on white cultural norms. Particularly impressive in Levine's study, aside from the massive amount of material he collected and synthesized, is his study of the trickster tales. It is here, in the widely circulated black tales about Brer Rabbit and other denizens of the animal world, that African-American culture related a plethora of different meanings to changing times.

Sanders, Lynn Moss. Howard W. Odum's *Folklore Odyssey: Transformation to Tolerance through African American Folk Studies*. Atlanta, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003.

Lynn Moss Sanders shows how Odum, as a collector of African American blues and work songs, anticipated some important precepts of modern folklore. Notably, Odum perceived the benefits of a collaborative and nonhierarchical approach to folk studies. By putting himself in a position to learn from a more tolerant former student and from one of his black folk informants, Odum became receptive to changing his paternal, segregationist attitudes about race.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources For Students

Abrahms, Roger D. *African American Folktales: Stories from Black Traditions in the New World*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

This is rather extensive anthology of African folklore. Abrahms has chosen to not use the original dialect or vernacular when retelling these tales.

Bascom, William R. *African Folktales in the New World*, 1992

In contrast to Abrahms, Bascom uses a more authentic dialect. It is helpful to compare and contrast some of the very same tales using very different narration and language techniques.

Bordelon Pamela ed., *Writings by Zora Neale Hurson from the Federal Writers Project*, 1999.

This essays examines the federal grant that was allocated to writers in the 1950's to research, analyze and discuss traditional methods of storytelling in the southern regions of Florida.

Harper, Michael S. ed. *The Collected Poems of Sterling A Brown*.

Brown's work is classic in most Black studies courses. The pieces deal with racial inequalities and struggle. The pieces on lynching are most moving.

Courlander, Harold and Ezekiel A. Eshugbayl. *Olode The Hunter and Other Tales from Nigeria*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1968.

The anthology provides very ancient tales that are primarily focused on West African culture and heritage. I found the piece most useful when talking about personification in animal tales.

Harper, Michael S. and Anthony Walton ed. *The Vintage Book of African American Poetry*. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 2000.

This anthology is useful for teachers and students. It is excellent at providing detailed biographical information on each writer prior to a unique selection of pieces.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Harper & Row, 1937.

The novel follows the fortunes of Janie Crawford, a woman living in the black town of Eaton, Florida.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Mules and Men*. York: Harper & Row, 1936.

This is a collection of black American folklore using varying accents and dialects of the Deep South (Eatonville, Florida). Hurston tells stories in an off-the-beat vocal rhythms and prodigious energy create a narrative drive that propels the listener. She originally wrote this work as a play with Langston Hughes. They had planned to call it "Mule Bone," but the two had a falling out prior to staging the work.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Dust Tracks on a Dirt Road*. York: Harper & Row, 1937

First published in 1942, this is Zora Neale Hurston's unrestrained account of her rise from childhood poverty in the rural South to prominence among the leading artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance.

Lester, Julius. *Black Folktales*. New York: Grove Press, 1970

As an anthology of folktales this is an excellent student and teacher reference. I recommend a class set for students to peruse and read independently as well as for class discussion. The selections are classified by genre (love, origins, etc.)

Web Resources

No authors. Site EST. March 5, 1997. Afro-American Almanac: African-American History Resource. The AFRO-American Almanac ® is an on-line presentation of the African in America.

<<http://www.toptags.com/aama/tales/tales.htm> >

Top tags is an Internet advertising site for businesses.

© 1996-1999, TopTags B.A.S., Have presented the disclaimer statement provided for users of this site. www.cocc.edu/colleenm/african/discl.html

No authors. AFRO-American@ -- (c) 1997 The Afro-American Newspaper Company of Baltimore, Inc. Afro-American@'s Black History Museum. <<http://www.afroam.org/children/myths/myths.html>> Please take time to explore and enjoy their interactive exhibits. Some interactive African folktales

No authors. Copyright © 1999 Netscape. Open Directory. dmoz is a human-edited directory of the web. Their mission is to be the most comprehensive Directory of the Web.

http://dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Myths_and_Folktales/Myths/African/

Cora Agatucci, 1997-2000: African Authors. COCC, Bend, OR.

<<http://www.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/achebe.htm>>

This website of Cora's offers a wide variety of information about African authors, more than I have found in numerous other web searches.

No authors. Copyright © 1994-2000 Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. "African arts" Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <<http://search.eb.com/bol/topic?eu=119474&sctn=5> > [Accessed April 5 2000].

Appendix A-Content Standards

Appendix A

Communication Content Standards

The following standards, as set forth by the Pittsburgh Public Schools, are addressed in this curriculum unit:

1. All students use effective research information management skills.
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...and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems
4. All students write for a variety of purpose.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments 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.

Appendix B

How Mr. Rabbit was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox

"Uncle Remus, " said the little boy one evening, when he had found the old man with little or nothing to do, "did the fox kill and eat the rabbit when he caught him with the Tar-Baby?"

"Law, honey, ain't I tell you 'bout dat?" replied the old darkey, chuckling slyly. "I 'clar ter grashus I ought er tole you dat, but ole man Nod wuz ridin' on my eyelids twel a leetle mo'n I'd a dis'member'd my own name, en den on to dat here come yo' mammy hollerin' atter you.

"W'at I tell you w'en I fus' begin? I tole you Brer Rabbit wuz a monstus soon beas'; leas'ways dat's w'at I laid out fer ter tell you. Well, den, honey, don't you go en make no udder kalkalashuns, kaze in dem days Brer Rabbit en his fambly wuz at de head er de gang w'en enny racket wuz en han', en dar dey stayed. 'Fo' you begins fer ter wipe yo' eyes 'bout Brer Rabbit, you wait en see wha'bouts Brer Rabbit gwinteter fetch up at. But dat's needer yer ner dar.

"W'en Brer Fox fine Brer Rabbit mixt up wid de Tar-baby, he feel mighty good, en he roll on de groun' en laff. Bimeby he up'n say, sezee:

"'Well, I speck I got you did time, Brer Rabbit,' sezee; 'maybe I ain't but I speck I is. You been runnin' 'roun' here sassin' atter me a mighty long time, but I speck you done come ter de cen' er de row. You bin currin' up yo' capers en bouncin' 'roun' in dis naberhood ontwel you come ter b'leeve yo'se'f de boss er de whole gang. En der youer allers some'rs whar you got no bixness,' ses Brer Fox, sezee. 'Who ax you fer ter come en strike up a 'quaintence wid dish yer Tar-Baby? En who stuck you up dar whar you iz? Nobody in de 'roun' worril. You des tuck en jam yo'se'f on dat Tar-Baby widout waintin' fer enny invite,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en dar you is, en dar you'll stay twel I fixes up a bresh-pile and fires her up, kaze I'm gwinteter bobbycue you dis day, sho,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"Den Brer Rabbit talk mighty 'umble,

"I don't keer w'at you do wid me, Brer Fox,' sezee, 'so you don't fling me in dat brier-patch. Roas' me, Brer Fox,' sezee, 'but don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"I ain't got no string,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en now I speck I'll hatter drwon you,' sezee.

"Drown me des ez deep es you please, Brer Fox," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'but do don't fling me in dat brier-patch, ' sezee.

"Dey ain't no water nigh,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en now I speck I'll hatter skin you,' sezee.

"Skin me, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'snatch out my eyeballs, t'ar out my yeras by de roots, en cut off my legs,' sezee, 'but do please, Brer Fox, don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"Co'se Brer Fox wwater hurt Brer Rabbit bad ez he kin, so he cotch 'im by de behime legs en slung 'im right in de middle er de brierpatch. dar wuz a considerbul flutter whar Brer Rabbit struck de bushes, en Brer Fox sorter hang 'roun' fer ter see w'at wuz gwinter happen. Bimeby he hear somebody call im, en way up de hill he see Brer Rabbit settin' crosslegged on a chinkapin log koamin' de pitch outen his har wid a chip. Den Brer Fox know dat he bin swop off mighty bad. Brer Rabbit wuz bleedzed fer ter fling back some er his sass, en he holler out:

"Bred en bawn in a brier-patch, Brer Fox--bred en bawn in a brier-patch!' en wid dat he skip out des ez lively as a cricket in de embers."

Appendix C –

Why the Negro is Black

One night, while the little boy was watching Uncle Remus twisting and waxing some shoe-thread, he made what appeared to him to be a very curious discovery. He discovered that the palms of the old man's hands were as white as his own, and the fact was such a source of wonder that he made it the subject of remark. The response of Uncle Remus led to the earnest recital of a piece of unwritten history that must prove interesting to ethnologists.

"Tooby sho de pa'm er my han's w'ite, honey," he quietly remarked; "en w'en it come ter dat, dey wuz a time we'n all de w'ite folks 'uz black--blacker dan me, kaze I done bin yer so long dat I sorter bleach out."

The little boy laughed. He thought Uncle Remus was making him the victim of one of his practical jokes; but the youngster was never more mistaken. The old man was serious. Nevertheless, he failed to rebuke the ill-timed mirth of the child, appearing to be altogether engrossed in his work. After a while he resumed:

"Yasser. Fokes dunner w'at bin yet, let 'lone w'at gwinter be. Niggers is niggers now, but de time wuz w'en we 'uz all niggers tergedder."

"When was that, Uncle Remus?"

"Way back yander. In dem times we 'uz all un us black; we 'uz all niggers tergedder, en 'cordin' ter all de 'counts w'at I year fokes 'uz gittin 'long 'bout ez well in dem days ez dey is now. But atter' w'ile de news come dat dere was a pon' er water some'rs in de naberhood. w'ich if dey'd git inter dey'd be wash off nice en w'te, en den one un um, he fine de place en make er splunge inter de pon', en come out w'ite ez a town gal. En den, bless grashus! w'en de fokes seed it, dey make a break for de pon', en dem w'at wuz de snopless, dey got in fud' en dey come out w'ite: en dem w'at wuz de nex' soopless, dey got in nex', en dey come out merlatters; en dey wuz sech a crowd un um dat dey mighty nigh use de water up, w'ich w'en dem yuthers come 'long, de most dey could do wuz ter paddle about wid der foots en dabble in it wid der han's. Dem wuz de niggers, en down ter dis day dey ain't no w'ite 'bout a nigger 'ceppin de pa'ms er der han's en de soles er der foot."

The little boy seemed to be very much interested in this new account of the origin of the races, and he made some further inquiries, which elicited from Uncle Remus the following additional particulars:

"De Injun en de Chinee got ter be 'counted 'long er de merlatter. I ain't seed no Chinee dat I knows un, but dey tells me dey er sorter 'twix' a brown en a brindle. Dey er all merlatters."

"But mamma says the Chinese have straight hair," the little boy suggested,

"Co'se, honey," the old man unhesitatingly responded, "dem w'at git ter de pon'time nuff fer ter git der head in de water, de water hit onkink der ha'r. Hit bleedz ter be dat away."

Appendix D –

The Owl Never Sleeps at Night

Have you noticed that whenever a creature starts in this world with a habit, it stays with him all his life? Not only that, he passes it along to his children and his grandchildren. Whether the creatures have two legs or four legs or more legs, it works just the same. Another thing is that if you want to see anything, you must open your eyes.

There's the case of the owl. At the very first, he was like the other birds; he had the same kind of eyes as the other birds, and he flew around and sang in the daytime, and when it came dark he went to roost and stuck his head under his wings and slept till daybreak, just like the others. But it wasn't long before he got into the habit of sitting up nights and calling out "Who-who," and he never has stopped that to this very day.

Here's what happened. During the week that the creatures were all created and were just learning how to keep house, the Good Lord noticed that there was something going wrong in the night and he felt mighty nervous about the whole thing. One morning he found the pig's tail curled up; the deer's tail and goat's tail were cut clean off; the possum and the rat had had their hair all pulled off their tails; the duck had lost his forelegs, the snake had lost all of his; and the guinea hen and the turkey gobbler had lost all the hair off their heads; and nobody knew what was going to happen next.

God had a suspicion that it was some of Old Nick's doings, but he never said anything to anybody. He just asked the owl if he wouldn't stay up that night and keep a lookout and see what the matter was and how it all had happened. And the owl said he'd be mighty proud to stay up, only he's afraid he couldn't see very well in the dark. The Good Lord told him that all he had to do to see in the dark is to open his eyes wider. So they fixed it up that way. And when it turned dark, the owl never went to bed; he just opened his eyes a little wider, and got out in the open where he could look around over the countryside. And every time it got a little darker the owl would open his eyes an little wider, and he didn't ever have any trouble seeing all the carryings-on.

And sure enough, along about midnight he saw Old Nick tying knots in the horses' manes. And the owl called out, "Who-who, who-who, who-ah?" With that, Old Nick was so scared that he ran away and left the horses, and struck out across the country in the dark. But the owl opened his eyes wider than ever, and he followed after him and every once in a while he'd call out, "Who-who, who-who, who-who-ah!" Well, he sure scared Old Nick away; but when it became day, Mr. Owl had his eyes so wide open that he couldn't shut them, and the bright sun gave him a terrible headache. Then the Good Lord told the owl that as he'd been up all the night before he could find himself a shady place and sleep all day to make up

for the loss of sleep the night before. But when night came around again the owl was rested, and he didn't have his headache anymore, and he felt so wide awake that he stayed up that night too. After that, he got the habit, and he's had it ever since.

--Retold by John C. Branner

Invisible Tortoise

Once upon a time, Tortoise was the adviser to, and spokesman of, the King. He was hard working, honest and just in what he did. Because of this, he stirred against him the hatred of other animals and they began to try ways of killing him. Although he knew that he was hated for his honesty and because the King loved him much he never failed to keep the company of his adversaries.

One day, the animals held a secret meeting to plot against Tortoise. They decided to assemble in the house of Deer and sent word to Tortoise that the child of Deer was seriously ill and that the wise advice of Tortoise would be very necessary.

The son of Deer was asked to lie down and to quake with limbs as if he were suffering from high fever. Tortoise arrived and was surprised by the assembly in the house and almost went back.

"Enter," said Porcupine. "We heard of the sad news almost at the same time and having gathered here we felt you must come and give your wise advice, for if we leave Deer alone, he may be so miserable. We will also benefit from your advice."

Tortoise said that it was the greatest honour that other animals gave him. They showed him the child on the bed further into the room and he was going near to the bed. Leopard who sat by the door had been asked and he accepted to catch and strangle Tortoise when he was about to leave the room. After touching the child and feeling his pulse and temperature, wise Tortoise remarked that the child was not so sick as they thought. He said that the child would not die but he advised the father to visit a native doctor. He promised to send some medicine when he got back to his house.

"Before I came, I passed and told the King that I was going to visit your child," Tortoise told Deer. "The King said he too is coming but he wants me quickly."

As Tortoise said so, all the animals were afraid that the King was coming. As Tortoise approached the door to take leave of them, Leopard leaped on him. Monkey who sat on the other side of the door was about closing the door when Tortoise managed to shout before his throat was completely pressed by Leopard: "Hey! That is the King coming to visit the child! Don't kill me!"

As he heard that the King was coming, Leopard released him at once and the door was opened again very quickly. As soon as he was released, Tortoise wobbled out of the room. All eyes were peering outside in fear of receiving the King. Tortoise

had dodged and disappeared behind the house. There was no King! The plot failed! After waiting in vain to see the King, the animals knew that their enemy had cleverly deceived them to save his life.

The animals who had assembled together did not want to scatter without plotting again to kill Tortoise. They thought of what they could do again to get rid of the one they regarded as an enemy. They said Tortoise cared little for any of them and they termed him a victimizer and a crook!

It was not long when they arrived at a decision. Well, three days from then was the labour day for the King. Every male in the village was to go up the hill to clear grass to roof the guest house in the King's palace. Tortoise himself had announced this and he would personally supervise the work. He would visit the job site once before retiring to continue his services in the King's palace. The animals therefore decided that a special bundle of grass shall be tied and kept ready to Tortoise to carry when returning to the palace after visiting the job site.

On the labour day, all the animals went up the hill very early and were busy the whole day clearing the grass and tying it in bundles which were being carried to the palace.

Late in the afternoon towards the time work was soon going to stop, Tortoise arrived carrying two spears. He greeted the workers cheerfully and they answered him with respect and thanked him for coming to encourage them.

"We knew you would come late, " said Antelope, "because of much work with the King. We have therefore prepared your bundle for easy carrying." He pointed to the bundle of grass specially made for Tortoise.

"Thank you very much," said Tortoise. He went nearer the grass. He looked at it with suspicion and just then he had an idea of what he should do to ascertain that the grass was not a trap for him.

He said, "My father had taught me a lesson and it is this: 'Never you eat anything without tasting it nor do any work without first examining its implications!' I must therefore comply with my father's teaching before I carry this bundle of grass."

As he finished speaking, Tortoise held one of the spears with a firm hand which went backwards to fling the weapon through the bundle of grass. Just at that moment there were several shouts of "Don't shoot! Don't shoot, son of the great one!"

Before the animals had even shouted twice, the bundle of grass had tumbled and rolled on the ground by itself. A fierce-looking Leopard tore it open, jumped out from inside and ran without looking behind into a nearby bush! It was the plan of the animals to enclose Leopard into the bundle so that he may gradually send out his hands and hold Tortoise by the neck and strangle him.

The other animals would then regard Leopard as their redeemer and support his appointment as spokesman of the King. When Tortoise saw this he nodded and simply said, "Thank you all for the plot."

The animals began shrugging their shoulders, each denying involvement in the plot. Once more, guided by intuition, Tortoise escaped the evil plans of his enemies.

--Told by J.T. Barika

Glossary

Ah got my Joe Moore in my hair- A Piece of gamblers lucky hoodoo.

Ah'm standin' in my tracks and stepin' back on my abstract- I am standing my ground.

Ain't never gonna set hawses-Never going to get along. As two horses pull together.

Aunt Hagar- Negroes are in similie children of Hagar; white folks of Sarah

Big Moose done come down from de mountain -Important things are about to happen

Bee-luther-hatchee-A mythical place, like "ginny gall."

Blue Baby- Nicknames such as this one given from appearances or acts, i.e. "Blue Baby" was so black he looked bblue. "Tush Hawg," a rough man; fill of fight like a wild boar.

One notes that among the animals the rabbit is the trickster hero. Lacking in size, strength and natural weapons such as teeth and claws, he continues to overcome by cunning. There are other minor characters that are heroic, but Brer Rabbit is first. In Florida, Brer Gopher, the dry?land tortoise, is also a hero and perhaps nearly equal to the rabbit.

The colored preacher, in his cooler passages, strives for grammatical correctness, but goes natural when he warms up. The "hah" is a breathing device, done rhythmically to punctuate the lines. The congregation wants to hear the preacher breathing or "straining

Blue-John - Skimmed milk.

Boody-sex.

Bogish-bogus.

Booger-A bogey man.

Bookity-book-Sound word meaning running.

Buckra- West African word meaning White people.

Bookooing- Loud talking, bullying, woofing. From French *beaucoup*

Southern Can-Hips.

Chigger- A young flea.

Chitterlings- Hog intestines.

Commercial nal- Commercial fertilizer.

Conhartic-Compound cathartic.

De time is done come where big britches gointer fit Li'l Willie-Things have come to a critical pass.

Don't let de 'gator beat you to de pond- Don't be out-done; or don't be too slow.

Don't pay all dese ole preachers no rabbit-foot.- Ignore these preachers.

Drift uh woods- 10,000 faces in the turpentine woods, i.e. tree trunks that have been cut on one side to make the sap fun from which the turpentine is made.

Eat acorns- I give you one point.

Eleven-card layers-Coon-can players. A two handed card game popular among southern Negroes.

Fat 'round de heart- scared.

Fiddle-guitar.

Froe- A damaged pocket knife.

Gamblin' wid yo' stuff out de window- Risking nothing. Ready to run.

Georgia Skin -. Any number of "Pikers" can play at a time, but there are two "principals" who do the dealing. Both of them are not dealing at the same time, however. But when the first one who deals "falls" the other principal takes the

deal. If he in turn falls it goes back to the first dealer. The principals draw the first two cards. The pikers draw from the third card on. Unless a player or players want to "scoop one in the rough," he can choose his own card which can be any card in the deck except the card on top of the deck and that one goes to the dealer.

The dealer charges anything he pleases for the privilege of "scooping," the money being put in sight. It is the player's bet. After the ones who wish to have scooped, then the dealer begins to "turn" the cards. That is, flipping them off the deck face upwards and the pikers choose a card each from among those turned off to bet on. Sometimes several pikers are on the same card. When all have selected their cards and have their bets down, they begin to chant "Turn 'em" to the dealer. He turns them until a player falls. That is, a card like the one he is holding falls. For instance one holds the io of hearts. When another io falls he loses. Then the players cry "hold 'em" until the player selects another clean card, one that has not fallen. The fresh side bets are down and the chant "turn 'em" and the singing "Let de deal go Down" until the deck is run out.

Gopher- Dry land tortoise.

Gospel-bird-Chicken. Preachers are supposed to be fond of them.

Got on by de hardest-With great difficulty.

Had a Kaiser baby- Have a child by the Kaiser.

Hasslin'-Panting.

He's got a cub-He has arranged the cards so he can deal winning cards to himself and losing cards to others.

High balling-Waving ahead. A railroad term.

Kag- Keg

Jenk-Have a good time.

John- Negro story-hero name. Jack or John (not John Henry) is the great human culture hero in Negro folk-lore. He is like Daniel in Jewish folk-lore, the wish-fulfillment hero of the race. The one who, nevertheless, or in spite of laughter, usually defeats Ole Massa, God and the Devil. Even when Massa seems to have him in a hopeless dilemma he wins out by a trick. Brer Rabbit, Jack (or John) and the Devil are continuations of the same thing.

John Henry-This is a song of the railroad camps and is suited to the spiking rhythm, though it is, like all the other work songs, sung in the jooks and other social places. It is not a very old song, being younger by far than Casey Jones and like that song being the celebration of an incidence of bravery. John Henry is not as widely distributed as "Mule on de Mount," "Uncle Bud" or several of the older songs, though it has a better air than most of the work songs. John Henry has no place in Negro folk?lore except in this one circumstance. The story told in the ballad is of John Henry, who is a great steeldriver, growing jealous when the company installs a steam drill. He boasts that he can beat the steam drill hammering home spikes, and asks his boss for a 9-pound hammer saying that if he has a good hammer he can beat the steam drill driving. The hammer is provided and he attempts to beat the drill. He does so for nearly an hour, then his heart fails him and he drops dead from exhaustion. It is told in direct dialogue for the greater part. The last three verses show internal evidence of being interpolated from English ballads. Judge the comparative newness of the song by the fact that he is competing with something as recent as a steam drill. For music for "John Henry" see Music Appendix.

Jook- a fun house. Where they sing, dance, gamble, love and compose "blues" songs incidentally.

Jook it-Play the piano in the manner of the jook or "blues."

Li'dard knot- Lightwood, fat pine. So called because it is frequently used as a torch.

Log-rolling-When people used to get out logs to build a house they would get the neighbors to help. Plenty of food and drink served. Very gay time.

Long-house-. Another name for jook. Sometimes means a mere bawdy house. A long low building cut into rooms that all open on a common porch. A woman lives in each of the rooms.

Mockin' bird- Some say it is a jay bird.

Nora-Noah.

Old Hannah- The Sun.

Parched-Roasted.

Pickin' de box- playin the guitar. Rayfield and gab'ull

Raw Head- He was a conjure doctor. They are always referred to as "two-headed doctors" i.e. twice as much sense.

Shake-baby- A dress very tight across the hips but with a full short skirt; very popular on the "jobs."

Shoo-shooing-Whispering.

Shug- short for sugar

Signify- To show off.

Skillet blonde- Very black person.

So yo' egg bag kin rest easy- So that you can be at ease. A hen is supposed to suffer when she has a fully developed egg in her.

Spuddin- playing for small change

Squat-Nothing.

Squinch Owl-Screech owl, sometimes known as a shivering owl.

Stob-Stake.

Straw-boss-The low paid poor white section boss on a railroad; similar to the swamp boss who works the gang that gets the timber to the sawmill.

Testimony- There is a meeting called a "love?feast" in the Methodist Church and an "experience meeting" with the Baptists. It is held once a month, either on a week?night or a Sunday morning preceding the Communion service. It is a Protestant confessional. No one is supposed to take communion unless he is on good terms with all of the other church members and is free from sin otherwise. The love?feast gives opportunity for public expression of good?will to the world. There are three set forms with variations. (i) The person who expects to testify raises a hymn. After a verse or two he or she speaks expressing (a) love for everybody, (b) joy at being present, (c) tells of the determination to stay in the field to the end. (2) Singing of a "hot" spiritual, giving the right hand of fellowship to the entire church, a shouting, tearful finish. (3) (a) Expresses joy at being present, (b) recites incident of conversion, telling in detail the visions seen and voices heard, (c) expresses determination to hold out to the end.

It is singular that God never finds fault, never censures the Negro. He sees faults but expects nothing different. He is lacking in bitterness as is the Negro story?teller himself in circumstances that ordinarily would call for pity.

The devil is not the terror that he is in European folk-lore. He is a powerful trickster who often competes successfully with God. There is a strong suspicion that the devil is an extension of the story?makers while God is the supposedly: impregnable white masters, who are nevertheless defeated by, the Negroes.

To choose my ruthers- Make a choice.

Throw it in de alley- Get low down.

Playin' wid yo' stuff out de winder -Risking nothing, i.e. hat coat and shoes out the window so that the owner can run if he loses.

White mouf-A very hungry person is supposed to look ashy-gray around the mouth.

Woofing- Aimless talking. A man half seriously flirts with a girl, half seriously threatens to fight or brags of his prowess in love, bottle or in financial matters. The term comes from the purposelessness of barking dogs at night.