

**India Through Its Folklore**  
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**Abstract**

The curriculum project, *India Through Its Folklore*, will lead students through the act of discovery, the discovery of India and its folklore, ultimately allowing students to work collaboratively to create an artistic response. This artistic response will allow students to discover, interpret, perceive and respond to Indian cultures.

**Overview**

The act of discovery is crucial to the development of an artist, whether it be an actor, a writer, a dancer, a pianist, or a painter. Discovery is not a skill that is not easily taught on the road to becoming an artist, just as discipline towards one's art does not develop over night. Developing artists must be provided opportunities of discovery in all art forms throughout their artistic development, which in turn, teaches discipline in the pursuit of a focused artistic response in any medium.

The curriculum project, *India Through Its Folklore*, will lead students at The Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) through the act of discovery, the discovery of India and its folklore, ultimately allowing students to work collaboratively to create an artistic response. This artistic response will allow students to discover, interpret, perceive and respond to Indian cultures. Students at CAPA High School spend three hours a day, five days a week for four years studying one art form. Students are passionate about the arts and are taught to become lifelong appreciators of the arts. Much focus is devoted to the intrinsic, historical, and cultural value of the arts. *India Through Its Arts* will be implemented during the art portion of the school day, one day a week for three hours. Students participating in this project will be from the literary arts, theatre, and visual arts department. Involvement from dancers, vocalists, and musicians will be dependent upon the individual group proposals.

All students involved in this project have been trained in their individual art area by working artists. It is the aim to teach the students at CAPA the discipline needed to succeed in art. Creating collaborative opportunities within the CAPA community provides our developing artists real world experiences, teaches discipline, and shows the value of process in creation. There is a great willingness of our students to engage in such project because it allows the students to work as singers, drummers, writers, or

dancers. Much of this curriculum project will be entirely student driven, allowing our students to experience the collaborative creative process.

The artistic response by the collaborative group of artists will be process driven and the students will formally propose a project as well as set goals and deadlines. The assessment of the project will be determined by these goals and deadlines set by the students. The goal is to allow students the artistic freedom but to teach the process and discipline of art. Each group of students will be accountable for a written proposal that outlines the overall idea of the project, the goals for project, areas to research, the writing element of the project, the visual element, and the performance aspect. The students will work collaboratively as artists and individually as writers, painters, and actors to produce a collaborative piece of artwork.

The content of the material is designed to include myriad activities for students ranging from lectures to independent research to collaborative work leading to the discovery of the richness of Indian cultures. The class will be divided into two phases, twelve weeks of designed instruction and twelve weeks of process and production. The first twelve weeks of designed instruction will focus upon providing students a general knowledge of the history of and present day India, as well as a taste of the folklores of the country. Once the students have a working understanding of India, collaborative groups will be formed to research, propose, and produce an artistic response within an established paradigm that mimics a style of folklore from India. Much of the work in phase two of the project will be student driven allowing the students to use their experience as writers, actors, painters, dancers, and musicians to create a collaborative piece of art resulting from student discovery of India and its folklore.

The material presented in *India Through Its Arts* in no way attempts to provide students a complete and comprehensive examination of Indian folklore, but rather attempts to pique the students' desire to discover, interpret, perceive, and respond. As the teacher, I will serve as a resource person leading students to the discovery of new knowledge. It is anticipated that the students will embrace the diversity of Indian folklore, and flourish in their artistic responses to such rich diversity.

## **Rationale**

Folklore, deeply embedded in a country's culture, is an ideal way to approach the teaching of cultural understanding and tolerance to students, avoiding the ownership for our students of the many cultural preconceptions found in our society. As educators in the year 2004, our roles morph and transform much as does our society. I believe it crucial that as educators we make fruitful efforts to teach our students cultural understanding and tolerance. At CAPA High School I have had great successes approaching this subject through the use of both traditional and contemporary folklore of a given country while allowing the artists freedom to utilize their intensive artistic training to work collaboratively and respond in an artistic manner.

In the pages to follow I will examine the ideas between artistic expression and cultural influences in India as found in both traditional and contemporary folklore as a means to examine statements about the people and culture of India. A focus will be on Indian village life and the transformation of oral traditions and its performance elements throughout history. I will attempt to show the reader that the folklore of India is indicative of the way of life in India today and throughout history.

For the ease of the reader I have categorized the material into the following groups.

- Background and Historical Context of India
- Indian Village Life
- Folklore
- Conclusions

### **Background and Historical Context of India**

*India is, the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grand mother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured in India only.* Mark Twain (The United States Educational Foundation in India)

India boasts a population of over one billion people in the year 2004; the mother of all languages is Sanskrit; is estimated to have an annual growth rate of 1.8%; the literacy rate is 65%; the major religions are Hindi, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, and Parsi; Hindi is the recognized language but 17 other languages are scheduled in the constitution; the major determinants of social and political organization are religion, caste, and language; an estimated 416 million Indians are in the work force; 30% of the population lives in the 200 cities, leaving 70% of the population to live in the 550,00 villages. India is indeed a fascinating study. It is a wonder that one cannot look into the heart of India and see only one India. This country is deeply embedded in its cultural traditions—its Hindi traditions, its Sikh traditions, its village traditions. To understand India one must examine the parts that comprise the whole. Admittedly, a laborious task would be to provide the reader with a context of the many parts of India. For the sake of brevity, this historical context will limit itself in its goal to present a clear, logical, and useable context of India for one's students. I ask the reader to keep in mind that the knowledge presented to our students is intended to motivate students to discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to India. Our students' discoveries should be individual according to their perceptions and this historical context is to be used to provide our students a common knowledge of India both present day and historically. This common knowledge will allow the students involved in this curriculum project a shared body of information to build upon throughout the year and to work collaboratively with other students.

A defining moment--at midnight on August 15, 1947--India gained independence from British Colonial rule and has been operating as a Federal Republic with a president in the role of chief of state and the prime minister as the head of government. India is presently the tenth industrialized country in the world, comprised of five regions, the desert region,

the southern peninsula and islands, the mountain zone, and the plains of the Ganga and the Indus. Contrary to popular belief before British rule India was one of the most wealthy countries in the world, rich in culture and art as well as monetarily.

India is a country that exists today much as it has for centuries deeply imbedded in its traditions and cultures. Yes, traditions and cultures. It cannot be summed up as one culture or one tradition; there are many existing together much as it has for years. Many ethnicities and religions make up this great country that despite its odds finds great spirituality amongst its people. Romain Rolland, a French scholar remarks on India, "If there is one place on the face of earth where all dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India." (The United States Educational Foundation in India)

To gain a perspective of India's major periods throughout history, a copy of an interactive timeline can be accessed at:

<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/timeline/timeline.htm>.

This timeline will allow one to put India's history into context and begin to discover the roots of the traditions and cultures. The importance of traditions and culture is evident from the beginning of India's civilization, and one will quickly begin to realize just how embedded these traditions and cultures are to the India of today as they gain familiarity with its history. The intricacies of India's traditions and cultures that are woven throughout time still are much a part of everyday life. To discover India is to open a door to a richness of timeless society.

### **Indian Tribal/Village Life**

Life in the larger metropolitan cities of India: New Delhi, Kolkata, Madras, Bombay, and Chennai, is much as life is in New York, Los Angeles, London, or Paris. Maintaining strong traditional practices these cities are surprisingly quite Westernized, and one would have a hard time distinguishing parts of New Delhi from the Upper West Side of Manhattan or Shinjuku in Tokyo.

Life in India would be quite a different place should the majority of its people reside in metropolitan cities, but the truth of the matter is that the majority of India's population resides in villages outside of the larger cities and in the countryside. It is here that one finds the folklore alive in 2004, much a part of life, as it was hundreds of years ago. The heart of India may be found within the many villages that exist in modern day Indian.

Traditional Indian societies which exist in villages outside of the metropolitan cities and have a strong tie to the folk and tribal practices of the past are more easily observed on a daily basis in the villages than Madras or Bombay. This is not to say that the larger Indian cities are not closely linked to folk and tribal practices, rather that in the villages one may see evidence of these ties without the influences of the West more easily.

Villages exist within a framework illustrating a vision of life. A vision of life that exhibits a traditional approach ultimately reflecting the folklore of a society is easily seen throughout the villages of India. Central to this vision of life is religion. According to Indian folklorist Dr. Miri, "It is religion that, in however oblique and complicatedly symbolic way, presents the picture of a world, which organically relates man, society, nature and what may be called the sacred." (Indian Folklife)

Modern day Indian villages exist much as they have throughout history, individuals each performing a role in the society with obligations to the other members of the village. Roles are defined by birth. The roles of individuals play an important part in the success of the village as a whole. Without the commitment to the village as a whole these societies would not continue to evolve throughout history. Certain relationships are formed amongst members of a village or tribe for the benefit of the whole village. As throughout history, the breakdown of village life has been determined by needs of the village. There are laborers, artisans, farmers, and the like in each village. Standing in village life is usually determined by the craft or labor of the family. Craftsmen pass their secrets down from generation to generation. It is respected to come from a long-line of stone workers.

Within India, many types of villages exist today. Often times, villages exist because the members are tradesmen or craftsmen contributing goods or services to neighboring cities or villages. Outside of Kolkata, in Kumartuli, the village is primarily one of artisans that practice the iconographic traditions of Bengal. These artisans live amongst each other as their families have for hundreds of years working together to create life size figures of deities for use in traditional ceremonies throughout India. The iconographic traditions have been passed on from generation to generation. The craftsmen still follow the footsteps of their ancestors as they create these life size figures. The creation of these religious, historical, and symbolic figures follows a tradition. The artisans of Kumartuli still gather the clay from a tributary of the Ganges to mud these straw frames representing life-size figures of Sita or Kali. The mud dries and then the figures are sanded and painted using root and plant based paints. Once these figures are completed most are burned on holy rivers in India during festivals or homage periods.

A village outside of Varnassi near the holy site of Sarnath exists not as a group of artisans but rather as laborers. The individual villagers work as tradesmen in the city of Varnassi, but the village as a whole works together to provide the basics of life for its people: food, shelter, education, and value system. Each morning many of the villagers travel to the holy city of Varnassi to work as some sort of laborer in the city. Meanwhile, in the village many of the women provide the sustenance the village needs to survive. Tending to domestic and farming chores women and children maintain the village as the men barely earn a living in the city.

Admittedly most Indian villages exist far below the poverty line, but the villages are still full of vitality. A system of existence has been developed in each village, and depends upon what the village has and what the village needs. Similar to an American mayor, each village has a chief that ultimately decides with the help of a council what is best for

the village. The chief and council are usually well-respected elders of a community and their families have played important roles in the history of the village.

The way of life within villages is built upon a commitment to the village as a whole, and the members of a village work together to build a future for its younger generations. The homes of the villages are often meagerly built structures utilizing materials found in the landscape. The structures are not elaborate and often one family may live within one or two simple rooms, one for living and one for sleeping. The furniture is simple-- plastic patio furniture to American standards and simple beds unlike the comforts most Americans are accustomed. Most of the living is done outside and the shelter only keeps the rain and direct sunlight away. Electricity may be present, but only for a few hours each night--limited often to a single light bulb in each room. Running water is unlikely, as is an indoor bathroom in the homes. Each village has a supply of water that often is polluted and runs dry many times throughout the year. Bathroom areas are negotiable, depending upon the individual village. It is not uncommon for Indians to relieve themselves in the place where the need arises. Sanitation is certainly not up to the American standard in India. Education is provided within the villages through primary grades, and then children must pass a series of exams to continue in public education outside the village. A small percentage of children continue their education past primary school. The demands of the family to tweak out an existence prohibit higher education. The majority of children join the work force at an early age. These children begin to learn their family's craft or trade and begin to contribute to the overall good of the family.

A distinct difference is observed between males and females throughout India, but these gender roles are blatantly seen within village India. Traditionally women are seen as second-class citizens and this is certainly the case in village India. Women fulfill many roles in village India, and their male counterparts often are viewed as superior in many ways. Men work their allotted time towards their trade or craft, whereas women not only contribute to the trade or craft, but also run the house, children, and serve the man. Male children are favored and are often provided more opportunities than female children.

Many of these predetermined values and beliefs are deeply embedded in the idea of social status or caste and the majority of Indian villagers are labeled as Untouchables. The Untouchables are thought to be of the lowest caste, not worthy or deserving of privilege in life. The Indian caste system is directly connected to religion and social class in one's life is determined by one's karma in previous lives. Thus resulting in the belief that Untouchables are not worthy due to previous actions in past lives.

Despite the obvious difficulties in Indian village life, a strong tie to the folklore of the society is vibrant and gives Indian village life a unique traditional view towards life. To gain perspectives of specific Indian villages The National Folklore Support Centre published a quarterly magazine available on-line that presents case studies of Indian villages and their approaches to life and connections to the folklore of their society. These publications can be accessed at <http://www.indianfolklore.org>.

## Folklore

*Folklore brings a group together, sustains its artistic creativity, creates a convention and commits its to cultural memory but it is also true that folklore travels, merges, assimilates, and creates new contexts.*” M.D. Muthujumaraswamy (Indian Folklife)

Folklore in India is found in the tales, song, dance, art, architecture, and the ways in which its people approach life. Folklore is abundant in India and is still alive and vibrant in the year 2004, mimicking the traditions and practices from centuries ago. Along its journey the folklore evolved from setting to setting, the tales varied from teller to teller, the performance changed based on its audience, and the song from singer to singer. The purpose of folklore has remained constant throughout the years, to pass on cultural teachings or moral lessons to the future generations. *Folklore goes into the aspirations, memories, dreams, life-patterns, and indigenous knowledge of various races.* (Indian Folklife)

Folklore is an all-encompassing word that represents the traditions and practices of a society. *By the word 'folk-lore' a folklorist means myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, folk verses, folk beliefs, folk superstitions, customs, folk song, folk music, folk dance, ballads, folk cult, folk gods and goddesses, rituals, festivals, magic, witchcraft, folk art and craft, and variety of forms of artistic expression of oral culture or rural and tribal folks or unlettered city dwellers that bind man to man.* (Indian Folklife)

India houses a society so rich in folklore that to fully examine the folklore would be a lifetime worth of research. In fact, it was not until after India's independence in 1947, that serious studies of Indian folklore began to emerge from Redfield, Singer, Beck, Blackburn, and Wadley. In the last fifty years, much attention has been on collecting and preserving Indian folklore.

Jawaharal Handoo, a noted Indian scholar, believes the importance of studying emerging mass culture for its folklore roots. He believes that colonialism has brought folklore back to life in India and that it is evident in the social context of folklore as found in modern day India. The folklore embodies life and plays an important role in the traditions and practices of Indian daily life.

Throughout India, one observes folklore roots in the temples found in villages and cities. These temples are directly related to the cultural values and beliefs of the people. Indians visit these temples daily to make offerings and find enlightenment much as their ancestors have for centuries. At these temples one can observe folk life in action. Performances are often given in homage at the temples. The song, dance, or tales that comprise these performances have been passed on through the generations and are vital to the Indian way of life. The folklore of India has ancient roots, functioning as a way to reflect values and beliefs that have developed with modern culture, but yet reflecting the origins of such a rich society. The Indian calendar is filled with festivals throughout the

year that reflect the rich folklore. The folklore does not stop at the temples. It is apparent is virtually every aspect of Indian life both past and present. The architecture of India speaks of its folklore. The essence of Indian architecture visually depicts the richness of India's culture through Hindi mythology or even Parsi scripture. Traditional song and dance is still alive within the villages of India. These performances are taught to the younger generations to instill the beliefs and values of the village. The music of India represents its folk culture still relying on traditional instruments to depict sagas. Folklore roots are visible in all aspects of Indian life today and in its past. One only needs to look to experience its richness. India reflects its past and present through its living folklore.

A.K. Ramanujan's *A Flowering Tale and Other Oral Tales from India* and *Folktales from India A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-two Languages* provide a fabulous introduction to the origins of Indian folklore. The oral tales included in these two anthologies have presented themselves in various performance modes throughout history and are finding a face in modern day India. The oral traditions of India reflect the diversity of this country and its changes through the years. Folklore can be looked at as the history of a group of people that show a variety of peoples' beliefs, customs, practices, likes, and dislikes, ultimately giving meaning to the practices and traditions of everyday life. Indian cultures can be examined through the content of each tale as Ramanujan has collected from diverse groups of people throughout many regions of India.

Many efforts are surfacing in present day India to preserve the folklore of a country that otherwise would die a slow death. The government is allocating a meager amount of funding to preserve the folklore by teaching and training younger generations in: oral and literary traditions, the performance of traditional music, song and dance, as well as traditional puppetry, and various folk arts. The folklore of India and its strong ties to its society lies in the hands of the government to educate future generations about the importance of the history of its folklore traditions. As the influences of the West push into India, the country is attempting to continue preserving its rich cultural past.

### **Conclusions**

India speaks of its past in its everyday happenings. It is a country that has deeply embedded its traditions and practices in everyday life. It is difficult to separate the traditional from the contemporary in India. The folklore of India is still alive today much as it has been for centuries. As a living form of art, the folklore of India has discovered, interpreted, perceived, and responded to itself many times over the years and it is a practice that will likely repeat itself for centuries to come. The set of folk beliefs found in India drive this nation to one of diversity. These folk beliefs surface in the tales, song, music, dance, and performance of India and serve as a way to pass beliefs and values to generations to come.

### **Objectives**

Students participating in this curriculum unit will be expected to discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to India and its folklore as a means to cultural understanding and tolerance. The nature of this curriculum project's design is intended to allow students to work both independently and collaboratively to meet the curriculum project's goals. Students will discover the folklore of India through lectures, discussions, and independent research. Once the discovery of folklore is underway, students will begin to perceive Indian folklore through discussions, writing exercises, research, and artistic responses. Collaborative groups will be formed to allow individual students and their perceptions to come together to respond to India's folklore in a unique, creative manner. It is the belief that once students discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to the folklores of India, students will be able to recognize India and its folklore for its intrinsic, historical, and cultural value.

In summation the student will:

- Discover and recognize Indian folklore and culture.
- Interpret Indian folklore and culture.
- Perceive Indian folklore and culture.
- Respond to Indian folklore and culture.
- Propose, develop, and produce an artistic response to Indian folklore and culture.
- Recognize Indian folklore for its intrinsic, historical, and cultural value as well as possess a greater understanding and tolerance of Indian culture.

This curriculum project relates directly to Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities that are listed in the final appendix.

### **Strategies**

The strategies I suggest for this curriculum project have been proven effective when working with artists from CAPA High School. The students are writers, dancers, actors, artists, vocalists, and musicians who spend three hours a day devoted to their art form. Each individual student brings a world of artistic perceptions to the table based on their focused study of art whether it is writing, painting, or singing. Many of the strategies presented are designed to allow artistic freedom but yet adhere to a strict disciplined process for the groups of artists to follow. Teaching developing artist students' discipline is key to promoting the development of the craft. Although, this curriculum project is specifically designed for a unique arts environment, I believe that if the specificity of the arts student were taken from the equation, groups of students in traditional schools and their teachers could easily accomplish the project goals. I will first discuss my ideas toward creating a classroom that pushes its students to discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to their own learning, and then I will elaborate on the design and the implementation of this curriculum project.

### **Discover, Interpret, Perceive, and Respond**

Allowing students the opportunity to discover, interpret, perceive and respond moves away from the traditional image of a classroom and allows students to engage in their own learning. The days of quiet orderly classroom no longer take precedence in classroom where teachers engage their students actively in learning. Students demonstrate added enthusiasm in active classrooms and are more likely to retain

knowledge when the learning has engaged them in its acquisition. The students become stakeholders in their education and this drive for knowledge impacts the classroom with positive results.

### **Discover**

Students must be actively involved in the discovery of knowledge. Actively engage them in their own learning. Move away from the traditional mode of lecturing to your students. Begin to hold your students accountable for engaging in classroom discussions. Hold students responsible for presenting information to the class. Begin to think of yourself as the resource person. You are there to guide your students to learning. Discovery can occur during lectures, discussions, independent readings, writing assignments or in casual conversation. Once students become involved in their learning, the results are incredible. It changes the atmosphere of your classroom.

### **Interpret/Perceive**

With discovery comes interpretation and perception as children become engaged in their own learning. Allowing your students to opportunity to interpret and perceive means to make meaning of this newly found discovery, the knowledge. Students need to explore new concepts or ideas before they can truly take ownership. Merely reading or hearing about them once in class will not suffice. Students must be provided opportunities that they can process knowledge in terms of their own life or experiences. Each student may bring some special or unique to the class when students are interpreting and perceiving knowledge on a daily basis. Class discussions, journal entries, reaction papers, conferences all allow students to interpret knowledge. Processing the information and sharing their ideas will allow students to better grasp new ideas or concepts that they have discovered in the classroom. Encourage your students to interpret and perceive knowledge daily. It will create informed thinkers with a life long enthusiasm for learning.

### **Respond**

Given the opportunity to discover, interpret, and perceive students will amaze you when it is time to respond. Hold the students up to high expectations and clearly state your expectations! The student work will surpass your wildest expectations. Students are much more inclined to produce when they have a vested interest in this work. Hidden talents or skill are likely to surface and your students will think learning is enjoyable.

### **Implementation of Curriculum Project**

As this project is implemented in the classroom, I will utilize the concept of discover, interpret, perceive, and respond from the get go. The nature of phase one of the project will require students to attend a three-hour weekly seminar. During this phase students will engage themselves into the discovery of Indian folklore. I will guide the students through the art of discovery. We will examine India today and in its past to understand what makes India the country so deeply embedded in its folklore. As the seminar begins to grasp what folklore entails in India, we will then examine Indian film, literature, art, music, and performance art. All the while the students will be actively engaged in this process. A more detailed account of student activities is to follow. Once the students have a common knowledge of India and its folklore, the seminar will begin phase two. Phase

two will be devoted to the production of a response to Indian folklore. Working collaboratively, writers, artists, and actors will form small groups and produce an artistic response. All groups will be required to propose a project that includes writing, art, performance, and research elements. The nature of the student project is to allow artistic freedom. Students design the project and are held accountable to their goals. The culmination of the project is the group performance. Much of the time in phase two of the project will be devoted to studio time, allowing groups to complete their proposed project.

### **Classroom Activities**

Weeks one through thirteen will be designed classes and weeks fourteen through twenty-four will be studio classes that will allow each group to work towards the proposal, develop, and production of the project.

### **Week One**

#### **Objective:**

Discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to historical and contextual information about India.

#### **Content/Activities:**

1. Engage students in a large group discussion about prior knowledge and perceptions about India. What do they know about this country? Record responses on the board and then discuss whether the responses are subjective, objective, fact, or fiction.
2. Show slide show of Indian photographs. Engage students in lecture/discussion while providing them a context/historical background of India. Include information about present day Indian, its historical past, languages, government, major periods, art, education, culture.
3. Engage students once again in a large group discussion about folklore. What is it? What is Indian folklore? Does it serve a function in a culture? What does it say about a culture? Record Responses. What genres does it cross—writing, art, song, dance, performance? Record student responses for future seminars.
4. Show and Tell of folklore collected from travels in India. Allow students to examine the folklore and discuss its qualities.

#### **Enrichment:**

1. Journal Entry: Think about India and now think about folklore. What do you see? Explain. Elaborate. Expand.
2. Reading Assignment: Chapters two and three from Octavio Paz *In Light of India*. Points for discussion will be to compare and contrast Paz's impression of India versus the images presented in the slide show and the discourse resulting from the discussion.

### **Week Two/Three**

#### **Objective:**

Discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to Indian film, traditional and contemporary.

**Content/Activities:**

1. Introduce the history, social context, functions, and appeal of Indian films. Examine the influence of the medium upon present day India. Discuss how films may or may not present statements about the history of a society.
2. View, analyze, and discuss the film, *Pather Panchali*. This film will present a traditional view of India from the village aspect set in the not so distant past.
3. View, analyze, and discuss the film, *Monsoon Wedding*. This film will present a contemporary India with the influences of tradition visibly apparent.
4. Engage students in a large group discussion of the two films, paying particular attention to events or images from the films that reveal traditions and culture. What role does tradition play in each of the film's themes? Do the films make statements about Indian cultures? What is evident about India from viewing these films?

**Enrichment**

1. Journal Entry: Reflect upon each film, *Pather Panchali* and *Monsoon Wedding*. What aspects of Indian culture are revealed in each film? Are there aspects of tradition found in each? How have your perceptions changed toward India over the last few weeks. What do these film reveal about India today and in the past, if anything?
2. Independent Viewing: Seek out an Indian film at your local cinema or rental store. View the film and write a one-page discovery paper exploring aspects of tradition and culture as presented in the film.

**Week Four/Five/Six/Seven**

**Objective:**

Discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to Indian folktales, oral and written.

**Content/Activities:**

1. Pull on students' prior knowledge of folktales to engage students in a discussion of the genre of the folktale. What is it? Does it serve a function? Can or does it make statements of society? How did the folktales evolve? Are all folktales similar or do they change from teller to teller? Do folktales play a role in American society? What tales are familiar to you and your family?
2. Read excerpts from *The Folktale* by Stith Thompson to establish a working definition of the folktale.
3. Discuss the evolution of the oral into the literary folktale.
4. Introduce Indian folktales. Provide a historical context of the genre for the students. Refer to the introductions of Annie Flora Steel's *Tales of the Punjab* and A.K. Ramanujan's *A Flowering Tale and Other Oral Tales From India* and *Folktales from India A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-two Languages* for a basis to provide students with superbly written perspectives of the evolution of Indian folktales.

5. Read the folktale *A Flowering Tale* and allow students to create a model to utilize for discussion purposes regarding folktales. This model will allow all future discussions of folktales to concentrate on the same elements thus providing a common knowledge of aspects of a variety of folktales from which the students ultimately will respond to artistically. This will allow the foundation for all future discussions of folktales.
6. Access the e-texts of Annie Flora Steel's *Tales of the Punjab* and A.K. Ramanujan's *A Flowering Tale and Other Oral Tales From India* and *Folktales from India A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-two Languages* and allow students time to casually read these tales. Do not assign specific tales at this point; allow students time to explore the diversity and richness of these tales. Discuss the students' impressions and discoveries.
7. Create a reading list of folktales that reflects the diversity of the genre in India and have students working independently or in small groups begin to discover, interpret, perceive and respond to the folktales of India as presented by Steel and Ramanujan. Putting the accountability of processing these folktales upon the student is necessary. The students need to engage in the examination of these tales. The activities devised to engage students in this process should utilize strategies that are already in place in your classroom.

### **Enrichment**

1. Assign students to keep a reading log as they begin to discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to folktales. Generate the criteria for this reading log based on students' perceptions and what they have interpreted as valuable to the discovery of Indian folktales. The reading log will provide students a valuable resource as they begin to develop their own independent projects. Challenge the students to create criteria for the reading log that will allow the students to truly dig below the surface when examining the folktales.

### **Week Eight**

**Objective:** To discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to traditional Indian music.

#### **Content/Activities:**

1. Compile a play list of traditional Carnatic Indian music for the students. The following list of music represents an adequate introduction of Indian music for the students and is available through on-line resources or local music stores. *Music Around the World: India, Maestros Mehfil, Sankari Krishanan, Tamil Songs, Sankari Krishanan Carnatic Voices, A Gift to Ustad Allah Rakha, Ustad Bismillah Khan and Party, Padam Javali, and Language through Tamil* are all great selections to introduce Indian music to a group of students. A quick on-line search will provide on-line music as well, depending on your technological capabilities.
2. Begin the seminar on Indian music by asking students about their knowledge of traditional Indian music. Discuss differences and purposes between traditional and contemporary music. Introduce Hindustani (music developed in the northern regions) and Carnatic music (music developed in the southern regions). Explain that much of the focus within this seminar will be on Carnatic music due to the richness of its history and its connection to oral tales.

3. Play students an example(s) of a traditional Carnatic song. Discuss the students' reactions. Allow the discussion to be student driven. Record the responses.
4. Break the students into small work groups and direct them to research Carnatic music. Be sure that students look into the following topics: Purandara Dasa, father of Carnatic music, ragas, talas, history and social function of traditional Carnatic music in Indian society, Carnatic performers and the types of instruments used in the music, and the devotional content of Carnatic music. The students will readily find an abundance of material regarding Carnatic music on the Internet. Have each group report their findings to the class and by the end of the discussion the students will have a foundation of Carnatic music. A website worth looking at is <http://www.chandrarnkantha.com>. It will provide great information about Carnatic music.

**Enrichment:**

1. Provide students access to the play list of Indian music and allow students the opportunity to listen to the music. Creating a music file on the network at your school is a great way to allow students the opportunity to listen to the music. Similar to a reading log, have the students create a music log. Again, generate the criteria based on your students' input. What should they pay attention to as they begin to discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to Indian music? This music log will become a resource as well as the students begin to work independently.

**Week Nine**

**Objective:** Discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to Indian visual arts.

**Content/Activities:**

1. Break the class into 6 groups and assign each group one of the following areas: ceramics, paintings and drawings, sculpture, stonework, photography, fiber arts, and architecture. Assign each group to research and then present to the class both traditional and contemporary views, examples, and perceptions of the art form.
2. Lecture on my personal experiences with Indian visual arts on account of my Fulbright in India and Sri Lanka. View and discuss Persian miniature paintings as a way to enact the performance of important Indian myths. View and discuss the Bengali folk scrolls and their performance elements again in terms of preserving important Indian folklore. View and discuss the representation of folklore through rugs, wall hangings, and weavings. View and discuss the folklore as found in carved objects, wood, bone, and stone. View and discuss folklore element as found in traditional puppets from India. The emphasis of this lecture will revolve around the emphasis of the Indian cultures to represent their traditional myths, tales, and the like in their visual arts. With a little research this lecture can be accomplished by anyone. The Internet is a valuable resource with many visual links to images represented the above-mentioned artwork.

**Enrichment:**

1. The students will not have a formal enrichment activity for the visual arts seminar, but rather a bridging activity into the subject of the next seminar, performance arts as found in traditional and contemporary Indian society. Assign students to research throughout the week the idea of elements of performance as found in the folklores in India. This concept will challenge the students at first but after a bit of coaxing the students will understand. Have the students think about

each of the separate elements examined throughout the seminars thus far. What constant has existed? The relationship to the idea of folklore to the specific art form being examined? The oral and written tales, the music, the art all reflect Indian culture. So, how does this culminate in a performance of sorts? This is what the students should be seeking answers to as they research.

### **Week Ten/Eleven**

**Objective:** Discover, interpret, perceive, and respond to the performance of Indian folklore.

#### **Content/Activities:**

1. Begin the seminar by allowing the students to report the findings of their research to the class. This will open the discussion of the performance elements of folklore as found in India.
2. Discuss the various types of performance: storytelling, theatre, dance, music, and the combination of all or some. Pay particular attention to the purpose of each in society or cultures in India.
3. Introduce types of classical dance and the function in traditional and contemporary Indian society. The following types of classical dance are easily researched and often videos or DVD's are available of live performances. The Society for the Preservation of Indian Culture in Pittsburgh offers experiences with Indian performances across the city. The classical dances of India which are easily accessible are: Bharatanatyam of Tamil, Nadu, Kathakali and Mohiniyattam of Kerala, Odissa of Orissa, Kathak of Uttar Pradesh, Kuchipudi of Andhra Pradesh, and Manipuri of Manipur. Make clear the role of folklore in these dances.
4. Introduce Indian Theatre and Puppetry. Investigate Indian Theatre of Rituals, Theatre of Narration, Theatre of Entertainment, Theatre of Krishna, and Theatre of Rama. Again, this information is easily found with a bit of research and depending on the availability in your area, tapes of the performances are available. Emphasis again, should focus upon the elements of the folklore as found in the theatre of India.
5. Reflect upon the content of each of the seminars and draw conclusions about India and its folklore. This discussion should challenge the students to make sound conclusions to the result of their discovery, interpretation, and perceptions to Indian folklore.

### **Week Twelve/Twenty**

**Objective:** To work collaboratively and respond to Indian folklore.

#### **Content/Activities:**

1. Challenge the students to respond to Indian folklore utilizing the recently gained knowledge of Indian folklore as well as their training as writers, actors, and artists. Each group will consist of a writer, actor, and artist, and that they will propose, develop, and present a collaborative response to Indian folklore. Each response will include research, writing, art, and a performance element. Discuss the overall ideas behind the assignment and break the class into small groups.
2. Research and proposal development. Allow the students to begin to meet in their small groups to research and develop proposal ideas. Proposals should be in narrative form and address the following elements: overall idea for the response,

- goals for the response, research that must be completed to complete the response, the writing element, the artistic element, and the culminating performance. Allow ample time for students to develop valuable projects. Do not rush students into hurried responses. Once the proposals are completed, have each group discuss the proposal and ensue in a discussion about ways to approach each project.
3. Timeline. Each group should develop a timeline that will be used to enact this response to India's folklore. Each timeline should reflect weekly progress in research, writing, art, and the performance. Ideally, the timeline will be in a table format. This timeline will be used for progress checks and assessments during the process of creating this response.
  4. Once the timeline has been developed, each group should work towards meeting the proposed goals of the response to Indian folklore. The role of the teacher moves away from providing knowledge to mentoring groups to meet proposed goals and outcomes. The teacher will serve as a resource person, meeting weekly with each group checking progress and lending a hand when necessary.
  5. Presentation. Each group will be required to present their project to a larger audience. The students involved in the seminar can determine the specifics of this presentation. One performance that showcases each individual group may be ideal and fun to plan with the students.

#### **Enrichment**

1. Each student will be required to keep a journal during the process of responding to India's folklore. This journal will become a document that records the process each student used to approach this project.
2. A reflective essay will be required of all students participating in this seminar.

#### **Annotated Bibliography/Resources**

“A Second Visit” In The Writer and the World, Essays. V.S. Naipul. New York: Vintage Books, 2003. 15-34.

A great essay to provide the reader background material on India.

Blackburn, Stuart. Moral Fictions: Tamil Folktales in Oral Tradition, FF Communications No. 278, Helsinki: Academic Scientiarum Fennica (2001). 338.

Translations of Tamil Nadu folktales collected in the 1990's.

Char Sirijaya. “A Storyteller’s Voice from India.” Creative Keys. Storytelling Power. February 17, 2004 <<http://www.creativekeys.net/storytellingPower/article1042.html>>

A personal interview with a storyteller and their story. It outlines the crucial elements of storytelling in India.

Das. Gurcharan. India Unbound. New York: Random House Books, 2000.

A easy to comprehend look at India’s economic history.

Foley, John Miles. The Singer of Tales in Performance. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995.

A book that addresses function of singers in tales and other aspects of the performance elements of tales. The book primarily addresses British tales.

“Four Generations of Oral Literary Studies at Harvard University” David E. Bynum. Harvard University: 1974.

A summary of oral literary studies performed at Harvard. The article provides a great scope of literary studies.

Handoo, Jawaharlal. Folklore in Modern India. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 1998.

A close examination into the influences of traditional folklore on modern India. Papers

Indian Folklife, National Folklore Support Centre, Chennai.

<http://www.indianfolklore.org>

Indian Folklife is an excellent source for Indian folk art news and history. This is an on-line journal.

“In the Middle of the Journey” In The Writer and the World, Essays. V.S. Naipul. New York: Vintage Books, 2002. 3-7.

A wonderful essay providing the reader a look into the world of Indian culture.

“Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?” In India Through Hindi Categories. McKim Marriott ed. New Delhi/London: Sage Publications, 1990.

A great article that expounds on the ideas of a Indian way of thinking, quite unlike other societies that are not so deeply embedded in traditions.

“Jamished into Jimmy” In The Writer and the World, Essays. V.S. Naipul. New York: Vintage Books, 2003. 8-14.

A wonderful essay that will provide the reader background material on the Indian way of life.

Knuth, Rebecca. “Building a Literate Environment: Using Oral Based Reading Materials To Facilitate Literacy.” International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. IFLA. February 24, 2004 [www.iflanet.org](http://www.iflanet.org).

A article that defends oral based reading to improve student literacy rates.

Poitevin, Guy. “Dalit Autobiographical Narratives Figures of Subaltern Consciousness, Assertion and Identity.” Centre for Cooperative Research in Social Sciences Pune India. February 26, 2004 <http://www.ccrss.ws>.

A government funded project that examines dalit narratives to define dalit lifestyles in modern India.

Ramanujan A.K., ed. A Flowering Tale And Other Oral Tales From India. University of California Press, eScholarship Editions. California. March 2003. <<http://texts.edlib.org>>.

A collection of oral folktales collected by Ramanujan representing many influential oral traditions throughout India.

Ramanujan, A.K. Folktales from India A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-two Languages. New York: Pantheon Books, 1995.

A collection of oral folktales collected by Ramanujan representing many influential oral traditions throughout India.

Ramaswamy, Sumathi. Passions of the Tongue Language Devotions in Tamil India, 1891-1970. University of California Press, eScholarship Editions. California: March 2003. <<http://texts.edlib.org>>.

An academic paper that addresses the Tamil culture and traditions and its effect upon the Tamil language and identity.

Sadhu, S.L. Folktales From Kashmir. 2004. Koausa Organizaition. February 17, 2004 <<http://www.koausa.org/Folk/Sadhu>>.

A fabulous web site to find Kashmiri folktales.

Saraswati, Baidyanath. Primal Elements: The Oral Tradition. New Delhi: Indira Ghandi National Center for the Arts, 1995.

A close and indepth look at oral traditions in India and the evolution of the oral traditions in village life.

Sierra, Judy. Storytellers' Research Guide Folktales, myths & legends. Oregon: Folkprint, 1996.

A research guide to learning about ways to gather, document, and trace folktales, myths, and legends.

Steel, Flora Annie. Tales of the Punjab. 2004. e-text of the Celebration of Women Writers. February 17, 2004 <http://digital.upenn.edu/women/steel/punjab/punjabhtml>>.

A brilliant collection of oral tales from the area of Punjab, India.

“The Election in Ajmer” In The Writer and the World, Essays. V.S. Naipaul. New York: Vintage Books, 2003. 34-72.

A nonfiction essay by Naipaul that will allow the reader to gain a better perspective of life in India.

“The Relevance of South Asian Folklore.” In Indian FolkloreII, Peter Clauss, J Handoo, and D.P. Pattanayak, eds. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 1987. 79-156.

A useful essay discussing the functions of South Asian folklore.

Tharoor, Shashi. India From Midnight to the Millennium. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1997.

An overview of the major political events since India received its independence in 1947.

The United States Educational Foundation in India, Guide Book on Your Visit to India-A Fulbright Experience, New Delhi: Fulbright Foundation, 2003.

Thompson, Stith. The Folktale. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

. Great source of material concerning the context of the folktale.

V.S. Naipaul. An Area of Darkness A Discovery of India. New York: Vintage Books 1964.

A chronicle of Naipaul’s first visit to India and his perceptions of this diverse land.

## **Appendix-Content Standards**

## **A. Arts and Humanities**

### 9.1 Production, Performance, and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts

- A. Elements and Principles in each Art Form
- B. Demonstration of Art Form
- C. Vocabulary Within Each Art Form
- D. Styles in Production, Performance, and Exhibition
- E. Themes in Art Forms
- F. Historical and Cultural Production, Performance, and Exhibition
- G. Function and Analysis of Rehearsals and Practice Sessions
- H. Safety Issues in the Arts
- I. Community Performances and Exhibitions
- J. Technologies in the Arts
- K. Technologies in the Humanities

### 9.2 Historical and Cultural Context

- A. Context of Works in the Arts
- B. Chronology of Works in the Arts
- C. Styles and Genres in the Arts
- D. Historical and Cultural Perspectives
- E. Historical and Cultural Impact on Works in the Arts
- F. Vocabulary for Historical and Cultural Context
- G. Geographic Regions in the Arts
- H. Philosophical Context in the Arts
- I. Historical Differences in the Arts
- J. Traditions Within the Arts
- K. Common Themes in Work in Art

### 9.3 Critical Response

- A. Critical Processes
- B. Criteria
- C. Classifications
- D. Vocabulary for Criticisms
- E. Types of Analysis
- F. Comparisons
- G. Critics in the Arts

### 9.3 Aesthetic Response

- A. Philosophical Studies
- B. Aesthetic Interpretation
- C. Environmental Influences
- D. Artistic Choices

## **B. 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 read and use a variety of techniques to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use this 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 judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes, bias and 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 inform, persuade, and describe.