Stories Worth Telling Again and Again

In this first six-week unit of third grade, students read stories that are worth telling and retelling.

OVERVIEW

They read the tales of grandparents and they become familiar with the tradition of “trickster stories” across multiple cultures. They read a Langston Hughes poem, and review the parts of speech through Ruth Heller's World of Language books. The students engage the texts in multiple ways: They write stories they want to preserve; and they build upon their knowledge of geographical settings of folktales from previous grades as they research the cultural backgrounds of the trickster tales. They also dramatically interpret a Hughes' poem.

FOCUS STANDARDS

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- RL.3.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.
- RL.3.3: Describe how characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range or collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.3.1(c): Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.
- W.3.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- L.3.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- L.3.1(a): Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Tell stories from personal experiences and write narratives telling those stories.
- Revise and edit narratives with the help of peers and adults.
- Determine and analyze characters’ traits motivations in realistic fiction such as The Stories Julian Tells.
- Distinguish nouns, pronouns, and verbs from each other, understanding the role of each in a sentence.
- Perform a Langston Hughes poem dramatically, with expression and appropriate phrasing for meaning.
- Compare and contrast two “grandparent” books, specifically, the characters and message of the books.
- Determine the trickster, the fool, the problem, and the solution in various cultures’ trickster tales.
- Research one of the trickster tale’s cultures, as part of responding to class-generated questions.
- Create a class book or a multi-media presentation based on the culture research.
- Discuss Paul Goble’s artistic contribution to and reflection of the Native American culture.

**SUGGESTED WORKS**

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

**LITERARY TEXTS**

**Stories**

Our stories:

- *The Stories Julian Tells* (Ann Cameron and Ann Strugnell) (E)
- *The Stories Huey Tells* (Ann Cameron and Roberta Smith) (EA)
- *Gloria’s Way* (Ann Cameron and Lis Toft) (EA)

Grandparents’ stories:

- *Grandfather’s Journey* (Allen Say) (EA)
- *Tea with Milk* (Allen Say) (EA)
- *Song and Dance Man* (Karen Ackerman and Stephen Gammel)
- *Snowed in with Grandmother Silk* (Carol Fenner and Amanda Harvey)
- *Annie and the Old One* (Miska Miles and Peter Parnall)
- *Through Grandpa’s Eyes* (Patricia MacLachlan and Deborah Kogan Ray) (EA)
- *Knots on a Counting Rope* (John Archambault, Ted Rand, and Bill Martin, Jr.)
- *The Memory String* (Eve Bunting and Ted Rand)

Cultural trickster stories:

- *Tops & Bottoms* (Janet Stevens) (E)
- *Bruh Rabbit and the Tar Baby Girl* (Virginia Hamilton and James Randome)
- *Love and Roast Chicken: A Trickster Tale from the Andes Mountains* (Barbara Knutson)
- *Iktomi and the Buzzard* (Paul Goble)
- *Iktomi and the Coyote* (Paul Goble)
- *Iktomi and the Boulder* (Paul Goble)
- *Iktomi and the Berries* (Paul Goble)
- *Iktomi Loses His Eyes* (Paul Goble)

Poems

- “Grandpa’s Stories” (Langston Hughes) (E)
- “Aunt Sue’s Stories” (Langston Hughes) (EA)
- “Mother to Son” (Langston Hughes) (EA)
- “By Myself” (Eloise Greenfield)

**Stories (Read Aloud)**

- *The Apple and the Arrow* (Mary Buff)
- *Sign of the Beaver* (Elizabeth Geroge Speare)

**Poems (Read Aloud)**

- “Your World” (Georgia Douglas Johnson) (E)
- “The Telephone” (Robert Frost) (EA)
- “Nani” (Alberto Rios)
- “You Are Old, Father William” (Lewis Carroll) (EA)
- “For want of a nail, the shoe was lost...” (Traditional)

**INFORMATIONAL TEXTS**

Students will do internet research on a culture related to a favorite trickster tale:
African American slave culture
• European culture (choose specific country)
• Native American (Plains) culture
• Andes Mountain culture

Informational Text (Read Aloud)
• Throw Your Tooth on the Roof: Tooth Traditions Around the World (Selby Beeler and G. Brian Karas) (E)
• Merry-Go-Round: A Book About Nouns (World of Language) (Ruth Heller)
• Mine, All Mine: A Book About Pronouns (World of Language) (Ruth Heller)
• A Cache of Jewels and Other Collective Nouns (World of Language) (Ruth Heller)
• Kites Sail High: A Book About Verbs (World of Language) (Ruth Heller)

ART, MUSIC, AND MEDIA

Art
• Paul Goble, works (1933-present)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Teacher Notes: This unit is a natural fit for inviting grandparents into the classroom to tell their own stories or to read the stories under the “grandparent story” section. At the beginning of the school year, you may see some unique opportunities to engage the grandparents with their own grandchildren’s learning or to volunteer in the classroom. A Grandparents’ Day would be a perfect celebration to include in this unit.

Class Discussion / Literature
Introduce the unit by asking students if they have family stories they love to tell. Allow students to share favorite family stories for a few minutes. Introduce that day’s new chapter book: The Stories Julian Tells (Ann Cameron and Ann Strugnell). As students read the first chapter of the book, “The Pudding Like a Night on the Sea,” ask them to examine Julian as a character. You might post these leading questions and discuss their meaning by having your students ask you the questions as their new teacher: How would you describe Julian?

• What are his character traits?
• Why does he do what he does?

Read the chapter aloud to the students as they follow along. Continue reading the subsequent chapters in the days that follow, encouraging as much independent reading as possible. Continue to focus on character traits and motivation. As students finish this book, allow them to choose to move to other character stories in this series or to continue with Julian. This provides the opportunity to compare and contrast books and/or characters by the same author. (RL.3.3, SL.3.6, SL.3.1b, SL.3.4, RL.3.9)

Narrative Writing
Students have been sharing favorite family stories so shift the discussion to how stories are passed down from grandparents specifically. Then, assign the following: “Interview one of your family members (e.g., a parent, grandparent, or aunt) to learn a family story. Save the story by taking notes or by recording it digitally. Use the story you record to write a narrative.” This writing project should be worked on over an extended period of time, revising and editing using the standards as guidance. (W.3.3, W.3.4, W.3.5, L.3.1, L.3.2, L.3.3)

Class Discussion / Language
Ruth Heller has written a series of informational books that teach parts of speech. Remind students they learned about “nouns” in second grade. As you read the book Merry-Go-Round: A Book About Nouns (Ruth Heller), have the students listen for more information about nouns. Pause as you read to allow the students to share what they are learning or to ask questions. Review nouns, pronouns, and verbs using the Ruth Heller series. Create word banks for each part of speech and add vocabulary from class work to reinforce the application. (RI.3.1, L.3.1a, L.3.1b, L.3.1c, L.3.1d, L.3.1e, L.3.1f)

Poetry Performance
Give the students this prompt: “Choose one of the Langston Hughes poems to memorize or read interpretively. Be sure to communicate the meaning of the poem in the way you recite or read it.” Demonstrate fluent reading to the children, being sure to show how meaningful phrasing and expression guide the dramatic interpretation of a poem. (RF.3.4b)

Literary Response
After reading Knots on a Counting Rope (John Archambault, Ted Rand, and Bill Martin, Jr.), review the character traits of the boy and his grandfather. Have the students partner up and list three characteristics for each. Introduce another story that honors grandparents: Through Grandpa’s Eyes (Patricia MacLachlan and Deborah Kogan Ray). As students finish reading the new book, have them work with the same partner to list at least three characteristics of each character in the new story.
How are the grandparents similar and different?
How are the grandchildren similar and different?
What is the message of each book? What do you think the author might have wanted you to learn? (RL.3.3)

**Literary Response**
Lead a discussion with the students to introduce the genre of trickster tales, using questions such as these:

- One of the types of folk stories handed down in cultures is a "trickster tale." What root word do you hear in "trickster"?
- Have you ever played a trick on someone?
- Have you ever had a trick played on you?

Tell students that "trickster tales" are stories that involve playing tricks to solve problems, and to make them even more interesting, that they are from different cultures. As students read, encourage them to think about characters and their traits. Remind them that the story is not just in the text but also in the illustrations. The illustrations help to tell the story and to give hints about the culture or origin. Use the following questions to guide discussions after they (or you) read the trickster stories. Eventually require students to answer these questions independently.

- Who is the trickster?
- Who is the fool who gets tricked?
- What was the problem in the story?
- How did the trick solve the problem?
- Think about what the message of the story might be and why these stories have been told for hundreds of years. (RL.3.2, RL.3.3, RL.3.7)

**Shared Research**
Students have read a variety of trickster tales from various cultures. Now it is time to center on one of the cultures. You could, for example, choose to focus on the Plains Native American culture after reading the "Iktomi" tales by Paul Goble by assigning a short class research project on it. In small groups, have students brainstorm questions that can be answered about the culture. Assign each small group a question to answer. Use the internet, encyclopedias, and informational books to answer questions. When the students have finished their projects, create a class book or multimedia presentation to show what they have learned about the culture. When you are finished, ask "Why did the Plains Indians create trickster stories to tell to their children?" This activity can be repeated with any of the cultures from which trickster stories came. (W.3.6, W.3.7, W.3.8)

**Class Discussion / Art Appreciation**
Paul Goble is a talented artist who though not a Native American, has been fascinated by Native American life for many years and has dedicated his much of his art to the culture. Read the following quote to the students:

"[Goble's] art is tremendous because he is able to recreate the traditional forms with great accuracy and detail. The designs he draws are completely authentic and his colors are the same ones that were used by the old-timers before the reservation days. He is able to recreate the spirit of the old stories with his illustrations and his words." —Joe Medicine Crow, Crow Tribal Historian, and oldest living member of the Crow Tribe

Discuss the following questions with the students:

- What does this quote mean?
- How do you think this quote by a Native American made Paul Goble feel when he heard it for the first time? (SL.3.1c, RL.3.7)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**
- Dylan Pritchett: Storyteller (cuesheet) (The Kennedy Center) (SL.3.4, W.3.3)
  Note: This is a presentation on storytelling for children.
- Fables and Trickster Tales Around the World (National Endowment for the Humanities) (RL.3.2)
- Dynamite Diamante Poetry (ReadWriteThink) (L.3.1a)
  Note: This is an activity on nouns.
- Composing Cinquain Poems with Basic Parts of Speech (ReadWriteThink) (L.3.1a)
- Using Picture Books to Teach Characterization in Writing Workshop (ReadWriteThink) (RL.3.3)
- Maps of United States Indians by State (Native Languages of the Americas) (RL.3.7)
- Native American Informational Chart (Mountain City Elementary School, Mountain City, TN) (RL.3.5)
- A Collection of Trickster Tales (American Folklore.Net) (RL.3.2)
TERMINOLOGY

- author
- illustrator
- noun
- verb
- collective noun
- pronoun
- verb tenses
- generational stories
- trickster tales
- the trickster
- the fool
- problem
- solution
- internet search
- shared research
- narrative writing
- revising
- editing
- character traits
- character motivation

MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

This unit teaches:

- **Art**: Artist as historian (e.g., Paul Goble)
- **Geography**: Cultures (e.g., Plains Indians and Andes Mountain tribes)

This unit could be extended to teach:

- **Music**: Music of featured cultures (e.g. spirituals and Quechua songs)
- **Geography**: U.S. geography (as related to Native Americans)
- **History**: Native American Nations (e.g., the Bering land bridge theory, Southwest, Eastern "Woodland")

© 2010 Common Core, Inc. All rights reserved. • Contact Us