

Unit 5, Lesson 1: Tell Me a Story

Maryland Social Studies Standards and Framework

Standard: Peoples of the Nations and World

Topic: Elements of Culture

Standard: Social Studies Skills and Processes

Topic: Answer social studies questions

Standard: History

Topic: Settlement and Beginnings of New Societies

MCCR Grade 4

MCCR Standards: RI.4.1, RI.4.7

Objective

Students will:

- Compare and describe the elements of culture including shelter, recreation, education, oral traditions, art, music, and language of Native American societies.
- Present social studies information in creative ways.

Essential Questions:

What can we learn about a culture from their stories?

How do we today pass along information and keep records?

Grade Level:

3rd – 5th

Overview:

This lesson directs students to examine the many uses of stories. Many cultures, including Eastern Woodland Indians, practiced storytelling as a way to teach morals, pass on history, and to entertain. Students will develop an understanding and appreciation for the importance of storytelling to Eastern Woodland Indian society as an artistic and educational tool. By listening to and analyzing traditional Eastern Woodland Indian stories students will learn to interpret and identify the function of stories in Eastern Woodland Indian culture.

Teacher Background:

Eastern Woodland Indian cultures did not include a written language. Other methods were used to record and impart history. As a result, the stories of their ancestors and history were handed down through a well-developed oral tradition. Storytelling was an integral part of the preservation of the tribe's traditions, as well as a tool used to teach lessons and morals to children. Members of the tribe would have been familiar with these stories. Consequently, storytelling developed into an art form. Many of these stories continue to be handed down through families from generation to generation.

Lesson Procedure: Storytelling as moral lesson

1. Before reading the first story, discuss the role of storytelling in our modern culture.
 - a. Do we tell stories?

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- b. What are some of the reasons we tell stories?
 - c. Where do many of our stories come from?
 - d. What are some of the tools we use to tell stories?
2. Select and read a story from *Why the Possom's Tail is Bare*.
3. Lead a discussion of the story and its meaning to ensure students comprehend the story and to allow them to express their opinions.
 - a. What was the story about?
 - b. Do you think that the story has any other meanings?
 - c. Why would a story like this be told? To whom?
 - d. What is this story trying to teach?
 - e. How is the way the story is told (the art of storytelling) important to conveying its meaning?
 - f. Why is an oral tradition so important to societies like that of Maryland's Woodland Indians?
 - g. Why might this story be important to a member of a Native American tribe today?
4. Compare and contrast the use of storytelling in Woodland Indian society with modern society. Discussion questions might include:
 - a. What kinds of stories can you name that teach a lesson like the Woodland Indians' story?
 - i. Aesop's fables
 - ii. Fairy tales
 - b. What other ways do we teach lessons to young people today?
5. Help students to brainstorm about the necessary elements of a good story. The list should be composed of their suggestions, with help from the teacher when necessary. The teacher should record the list on the blackboard or a large sheet of paper. The list should be titled "Recipe for a Story." What are the "ingredients" of a good story? The final list should include the following:
 - a. Background information: details about the background of the story from personal experience, research or cultural references.
 - b. Character: information about all the people in the story, their background, characteristics, qualities.
 - c. Setting(s): the place or places where your story will take place.
 - d. Conflict: the trouble or problems that your characters will face.
 - e. Changes: any changes that occur as a result of the characters reaction to the conflict.
 - f. Spices: anything that "spices up" and adds interest to the story.

Materials

Book - *Why the Possom's Tail is Bare*

Related Resources:

Caduto, Michael and Joseph Bruchac. *Keepers of the Animals: Native American Stories and Wildlife Activities for Children*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, Inc. 1988.

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Caduto, Michael and Joseph Bruchac. *Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, Inc. 1991

Caduto, Michael and Joseph Bruchac. *Keepers of the Night: Native American Stories and Nocturnal Activities for Children*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, Inc. 1994

Kavasch, Barrie, ed. *Earth Maker's Lodge: Native American Folklore, Activities and Food*. Cobblestone Publishing, Inc. 1994