

**WISDOM OF THE ELDERS RADIO: SERIES 3, PROGRAM 5
HONORING THE UMATILLA NATIONS
GRADES 4-6 * STORYTELLING**

Lesson plan written by Esther Stutzman.

SUBJECT AREAS

Listening
Speaking
Writing

Interpretation
Analysis
Literature (both oral and written)

SKILLS

Communication
Oral skills

Writing
Language arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who complete the lessons will:

- Understand several forms of oral literature
- Understand importance of storytelling
- Be able to tell a story
- Critique a story

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This lesson plan is comprised of five lessons which include activities to enhance the standards and common curriculum goals of literature, writing, speaking, listening and reading.

Lesson 1: Introducing Stories

Lesson 2: Using Experiences to Shape Stories

Lesson 3: How Stories are Remembered

Lesson 4: How Stories “Travel”

Lesson 5: Telling Your Own Stories

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Why are stories told?
- How are stories preserved?
- How do stories “travel?”

- How can we collect our family stories?

PREPARING TO TEACH THIS LESSON

- Visit the suggested websites in the “References” section of this lesson plan.
- A visit to a local museum that has an Indian section will also be a good background.
- If possible, arrange a visit to Tamástslíkt Cultural Center

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Lesson 1: Introducing Stories

Standards

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- EL.06.RE.06—Listen to, read, and understand a wide variety of informational and narrative text.
- EL.06.RE.09—Understand, learn, and use new vocabulary that is introduced and taught directly through informational text, literary text, and instruction across the subject areas.
- EL.06.SL.02—Match the purpose, message, occasion, and delivery to the audience.

CD Segments to Play

Background

American Indian people have told traditional stories for thousands of years. Many stories are about Creation or tell of how certain landmarks came to be. Other stories are of the animals and how they helped (or sometimes hindered) people’s lives. These oral traditions are often teaching tools that storytellers used to reinforce customs, tradition and behavior. Many stories contain a moral lesson that the elders require to be repeated frequently.

But storytelling isn’t always a tale of long ago in a time when the world looked different. Many storytellers tell stories of their lives or their family’s adventures. Personal recollections often reinforce a family’s history and serve as a tool to remember a chain of events that happened to a certain person or group of people. These stories are also classified as oral literature to serve as remembrances of past generations.

“I was born in 1936. And there were two midwives. That cord had choked off my air, and I was totally purple. And those midwives unwrapped that cord and I wasn’t breathing. My grandmother grabbed me and breathed

into my mouth just like this. What do they call it now? Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. And just blew. And I came to. And then they slapped me on the backside and I started crying. But the doctor visited two days later. That was the visiting doctor to the reservation. And he told my mother, 'She's a very frail child. You're lucky she's alive. But she probably will not live ten years.' And here I am now, sixty-seven years old."

Kathleen Gordon (from Wisdom of the Elders Radio Series 3, Program 5)

Suggested Strategies

Activities

1. Interview

Have each student "interview" an older family member's favorite story and then write it down. It should be a story about the family: an adventure, a trip, something funny, how someone got a nickname, etc. Encourage the students to memorize the story for the Story Day (Lesson 5).

2. Read

ASK PERMISSION TO USE A UMATILLA STORY AS AN EXAMPLE OF STORYTELLING.

THIS ACTIVITY WILL BE BASED ON THE STORY AND ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO USE INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

3. Vocabulary

oral tradition
generation

culture
recollect (recollection)

Lesson 2: Using Experiences to Shape Stories

Standards

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- EL.06.RE.05—Demonstrate listening comprehension of more complex text through class and/or small group interpretive discussions across the subject areas.
- EL.06.RE.06—Listen to, read, and understand a wide variety of informational and narrative text.

- EL.06.RE.09—Understand, learn, and use new vocabulary that is introduced and taught directly through informational text, literary text, and instruction across the subject areas.
- EL.06.SL.02—Match the purpose, message, occasion, and delivery to the audience.
- EL.06.WR.02—Discuss ideas for writing with classmates, teachers, and other writers, and develop drafts alone and collaboratively.
- EL.06.WR.10—Write for different purposes and to a specific audience or person, adjusting tone and style as necessary.

CD Segments to Play

Background

Nearly every story comes from a personal experience, either the storyteller's own or that of an observation of other events. Based on this, an event becomes a story that is retold because of its interest, excitement or humor. We can all recall "Uncle Joe's fishing adventure" because as children we may have heard it over and over. This, then, becomes a family story that is shared through generations.

Within Indian communities, stories are fashioned in the same way. Often, stories are told based on a certain person's life that is used as a good example for children and future generations.

Kathleen Gordon, a Nez Perce elder, remembers:

"In our old days, they would always try to teach us to always have a good heart, to always treat people in a good way and to always feed people when they came to your presence. You offer them food or you offer them drink. You offer them whatever you have, even if it's your last piece of bread, you share it with them. And so we were taught to share and care for others."

Traditional stories are often based on values that have been established within tribes and families. Often these stories and values are applied to an "adventure" involving an animal figure or human-animal interaction. In this way, stories are shaped to share the guidelines of how people should behave.

Suggested Strategies

Activities

1. Discuss

Read the quote from Kathleen Gordon. Ask the class why this is important to remember.

- Why is sharing important?
- What is meant by “a good heart”?
- How is this piece of information a “family story”?

2. Share

Ask several members of the class to tell one of their own experiences that they consider being important enough to pass on to others. (Be sure to emphasize it should be their own experience and something they learned from it.)

- Why is that certain story important enough to tell others?
- Was a lesson learned?

3. Writing exercise

Allow time for each student to work on the family story they have collected. Encourage students to limit the time to less than 10 minutes.

4. Vocabulary

experience
guideline

elder
observation

Lesson 3: How Stories are Remembered

Standards

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- EL.06.RE.05—Demonstrate listening comprehension of more complex text through class and/or small group interpretive discussions across the subject areas.
- EL.06.RE.09—Understand, learn, and use new vocabulary that is introduced and taught directly through informational text, literary text, and instruction across the subject areas.
- EL.06.SL.02—Match the purpose, message, occasion, and delivery to the audience.
- EL.06.WR.10—Write for different purposes and to a specific audience or person, adjusting tone and style as necessary.

CD Segments to Play

Background

Storytelling is a true art. We are all storytellers, but some have the exceptional gift to engage and entrance the audience. Traditional Indian storytellers practice their art by repetition, with many stories requiring exact words be used in the same sequence.

Many storytellers work with an “apprentice” who will learn the stories and are shown the proper way to have presence before an audience. The storyteller guides the apprentice for as long as is necessary.

**ASK THE UMATILLA REVIEW GROUP TO SUGGEST A TRADITIONAL STORY.
ALSO IF THERE ARE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR TELLING UMATILLA STORIES.**

Suggested Strategies

Activities

1. Discuss

Discuss how things are memorized. Point out that some people do best by reading a portion of text then saying it over and over. Other people just continually repeat what they have heard. Use the example of a book report: first it is read and understood, then from memory, the report is given.

2. Play a game

The following is a game to illustrate how a story might be remembered:

- Have the class make two circles, sitting down (gym or cafeteria is ideal space).
- Select one person in each circle group to start the game by saying “This is my story” and at the same time, clapping hands once.
- The second person says the same thing, clapping hands once and then adding another motion such as crossing their arms.
- The next person says the same thing and repeats the two previous motions—clapping, crossing the arms—and then adds another simple motion.
- See how far the circle goes around before someone forgets all the previous motions.

This is a good example of how much effort it takes to remember a story. It must take repetition and concentration to make a good storyteller.

3. Writing exercise

Allow time for each student to work on the family story they have collected.

4. Vocabulary

repetition
genealogy

apprentice
sequence

Lesson 4: How Stories “Travel”

Standards

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- EL.06.RE.05—Demonstrate listening comprehension of more complex text through class and/or small group interpretive discussions across the subject areas.
- EL.06.RE.09—Understand, learn, and use new vocabulary that is introduced and taught directly through informational text, literary text, and instruction across the subject areas.
- EL.06.SL.02—Match the purpose, message, occasion, and delivery to the audience.

CD Segments to Play

Background

All over the world, when stories are told, they tend to “travel.” This is common because throughout history as transportation became easier, people were able to reach places their ancestors didn’t think were reachable. In Europe, stories came with people as they moved from place to place and so, for example, remnants of Irish stories can be found in France; French stories are told in Italy, and Austrian tales often surface in Spain. These stories then become a part of the host country’s oral literature.

With American Indian stories, trade routes carried stories from one place to another. When a man or woman married into another tribal group, those stories became family stories that were retold for generations.

When the Indian people were sent to reservations, many oral traditions were exchanged and shared. Many versions of the same story might exist within one region. An example is the many versions of Coyote stories and adventures that vary from region to region but basically have the same outcome.

TALK WITH THE UMATILLA REVIEW GROUP TO SEE IF THERE ARE EXAMPLES OF TRAVELING STORIES

Suggested Strategies

Activities

1. Play a game

Gather the students in a circle. This game is the “telephone” game. Begin with one person whispering the phrase to the next, and so on until the end. Start with a phrase such as:

- “Coyote walked to the village”
- “The woman scraped an elk skin”
- “Three men went to Celilo Falls”

We all know what the outcome will be. The last person’s phrase will not resemble the starting phrase.

2. Discuss

- When did the phrase change? How far did the actual phrase go before it became something different?
- Why do you think this happened?
- What could be done to make sure the phrase stayed the same?
- How did Indian people make sure the stories were correct?
- Why is it important for the story to be correct?

3. Vocabulary

TO BE COMPLETED WITH SOME UMATILLA WORDS FROM A STORY

Lesson 5: Telling Your Own Stories

Standards

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- EL.06.RE.05—Demonstrate listening comprehension of more complex text through class and/or small group interpretive discussions across the subject areas.
- EL.06.SL.02—Match the purpose, message, occasion, and delivery to the audience.
- EL.06.RE.06—Listen to, read, and understand a wide variety of informational and narrative text.
- EL.06.SL.03—Organize information using supporting details, reasons, descriptions, and examples.

- EL.06.SL.08—Use effective rate, volume, pitch, and tone, and align non-verbal elements, including eye contact, to sustain audience interest and attention.

CD Segments to Play

Background

To be a storyteller, a person has to do just that: tell a story.

But a storyteller who engages an audience works with many techniques to keep the audience interested. Many tellers have distinctive voices or gestures; others use sounds or alter their voices to emphasize characters or events.

It is important that storytellers use movement so that the audience's attention will be drawn to one place.

In the following activity, encourage the students to use some of these methods when they tell their story. Also, encourage each student to attempt to memorize what they will be telling.

Suggested Strategies

Activities

1. Share

- Each student should have collected and written down a family story. Time has been set aside previously for the student to “practice” the story.
- For a classroom with a large number of students, this activity can take place over several days. It is suggested that each storytelling session not last longer than approximately 30 minutes.
- Before each student tells their story, have them tell the class who told them the story, where the story takes place and when.
- Have each student write their name on a piece of paper and put this into a bowl or basket. Draw names instead of calling on individuals so that it will be fair to all.
- As each student tells their story, remind the class not to interrupt with comments. Storytellers do better when they have a continual chain of thought.

2. Discuss

At the end of each storytelling session, ask the following questions:

- Before you collected this story, did you hear it before?

- Did this story help you to learn more about your family?
- Have you told this story to someone else besides the class?
- Will you tell the story to other people?
- Did telling the story in front of the class make you nervous? Why?
- Will you be asking your family to tell you more stories?

EXTENDING THE LESSON/REFERENCES

1. Any and all parts of the storytelling/arts lessons can be used in other class activities such as reading, writing, oral literature, drama.
2. Books containing stories of American Indians are useful in understanding many aspects of the culture: how lessons are learned, how history is passed down, etc.
3. During regular reading periods, choose a book that contains Indian stories and reference previous learning about storytelling.
4. In writing segments, consider repeating the exercise of students collecting a family story.

ASK THE UMATILLA REVIEW GROUP TO SUGGEST ADDITIONAL WEBSITES AND APPROVED READING MATERIAL