

Recurring Themes of African American Folktales

Catherine Thornton Brownlee

Anna Shaw Middle School

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*“If we stand tall, it is because we stand on the
backs of those who have gone before us.”*

-- African proverb

Overview

The native African and Afro-American have endured the harsh realities of being uprooted from their homeland, forced into slavery, witnessed the destruction of their families, and the annihilation of dignity and self-worth. These same Africans and Afro-Americans banded together, and called upon the inner strength from their great warrior ancestors. They survived despite years and years of torture. In order to endure the many hardships and nightmarish events, many relied on the tales of their ancestors that gave inspiration and kept some semblance of hope alive.

The aim of the curriculum unit is to introduce my 8th grade Reading and Language Arts class to the rich traditions associated with African American folktales. The tales that gave a voice to the downtrodden and mistreated, abused soul. It gave them a means of sharing their culture, values and history.

Throughout this unit, students will become exposed to various folktales by noted authors Zora Neale Hurston and Virginia Hamilton. In addition, many of the tales have been passed down thru the ages with “no known” authors. The focus will be on the recurring themes found in the folktales. Students will analyze and interpret the recurring themes and symbolism found in the works of art. Emphasis will be placed on skills such as sequencing, identifying main ideas and supporting details. Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion. There will be many opportunities for making comparisons and contrast, making inferences and recognizing causes and effects. In addition, students will interpret the figurative language and identify the literary devices with selections. Using the arts as an integral medium the students will become familiar with the art form of storytelling that has enriched the Afro-American culture.

Rationale

The African American folktale has its roots embedded in the Western African literary and cultural forms of expression. The Afro-American folktale originated from the African people who were brought to America by force. Ripped from their homelands, torn from their past, they had to leave all they knew behind – their families, languages, customs and social groups. The African slaves brought to the New World faced a complex aspects of cultural confrontation. Slave owners forbid slaves to speak in their own languages and tried to domesticate them by denying them their own language, their religion, their values and belief systems. Those from similar tribes were separated and taken to various plantations. Strict punishments were given to those Africans who insisted on keeping their own language, called themselves by their true names and continued to practice cultural or religious ceremonies. Learning to read and write was forbidden by law. So, how could African-American people tell their own stories yet keep their own cultural identity? By merging what they could retain from their African heritage with forms they could exact from the New World cultures. The art of storytelling was created.

The art of storytelling of these folktales accomplished many purposes. They provided a means of escape from the pressures of slavery. They preserved the foundations of their culture. In addition, the telling of folktales allowed the culture and traditions to be passed down throughout the generations. Slaves were empowered by the storytelling that could not be taken from them by the slave masters. The folktales became a sort of code language built to teach survival and unite the slaves as one.

Roger D. Abrahams in the *Afro-American Folktales stories from Black Traditions in the New World* (1985) states that folktales were told for the fun of it, even when the stories are told in the face of death in the community. They may embody larger truths, but they are called lies and nonsense, by those who tell and listen and laugh. One definition of a folktale is an imaginative attempt to relate events, express feelings and explain phenomena according to a graphic and remember-able pattern. This attempt, normally begun by an individual is transmitted to other individual by word of mouth or by action. Through repetition and unconscious variation, it loses its original traits and becomes a common possession of a group. Folktales are alive and constantly changing. They change according to the personality of the narrator. Each storyteller presents the story differently and each listener perceives his or her own meaning. The story is relevant to the hearer and many different meaning may be correct. “In the end, the meaning of a folktale does not lie in the story itself, but in the minds of the audience.”

Slaves created tales in which animals such as rabbit, fox, bear, wolf, turtle, terrapin, snake and possum took on the characteristic of the people found in the new environment of the plantation. The rabbit known as “B”rabby and later called Bah, Bruh Rabbit was a popular character. The rabbit was small and helpless compared to the powerful bear, the wily fox and the ferocious wolf. However the slave teller made the rabbit smart, lucky and clever. He became the winner over larger and stronger animals.

Bruh Rabbit sometimes go into trouble just as the slaves did. The slaves identified with the rabbit.

After the Civil War, the slave character formerly depicted as Bruh Rabbit was now called John. John became the trickster who outwits Old Massa, the slave owner and wins freedom. The slave narratives developed into true tales of escape as did tales of magic, fantasy, escape tales and supernatural tales.

A number of stories presented their point of view in a lesson form. Lessons that black children needed to learn in the dealings with the “white folks’ world” The stories opened their eyes to important truths. An example of one such story was when Sis Goose was caught by Brer Fox while she was swimming around the pond. She got really annoyed about that because she felt that she had every right to swim there; so she took Fox to court. But when they got into court and Sis Goose looked around, the sheriff, he was a fox; and the judge was a fox too; and the attorneys, they were all foxes. As were the jurymen. So they tried old Sis Goose, convicted her, and executed her there right on the spot, and soon were picking at her bones. The moral: “When all the folks in the courthouse are foxes and you are just a common goose there ain’t gonna be much justice for colored people.”

Zora Neale Hurston, one of the greatest African American storytellers spent many years traveling throughout the Deep South collecting folktales. It was her goal to present authentic African American folklore, not something doctored to suit stereotyped notions of black culture. Hurston confided to Professor Alain Locke the “White people could not be trusted to collect the lore of others; they would take all the life and soul out of everything.” She believed the stakes of such collecting were too high. Oral folklore was both crucial to the cultural legitimacy. Hurston feared that the “greatest cultural wealth of the continent was disappearing without the world ever realizing that it had ever been.” Hurston believed that Negro folklore is not a thing of the past. It is still in the making. Its great variety shows the adaptability of the black man; nothing too old or too new, domestic or foreign, high or low for his use. God and the devil are paired, and are treated no more reverently than the common man. The Old Massa is sometimes a smart man and often a fool. The automobile is ranked alongside of the oxcart.

As stated earlier, folktales had a purpose within Afro-American culture. The folktales that graced many generations were just not stories; they were lessons that had to be instilled in the minds of the people in order to maintain the race. The recurring themes that resonated through out the numerous folktales were more a less a guide for survival. Abrahams categorized the recurring themes in the following manner:

1. *Getting Things Started: How the world got put together that way.*

Afro-American folktales reveal a different vision of just how life is ordered and given value. The characters are in opposition to each other. The eternal drama pits God against the Devil, humans against animals, men against women and master against the slave. A resolution occurs when one or another

of the opposed parties is able to persuade God (or some other judge) of the virtue of their position. Even more frequently, the figure making the judgment gets annoyed at what he has done and works out a countermeasure to reinstate the original opposition in different terms. Both God and the devil are humanized and seen as jovial. In the tale, “Never Seen His Equal” which is based on the book of Genesis, God is seen as all powerful and the devil sits himself in opposition to maker. The tales are very apt in describing how social and phenomena came into being even to the inclusion of “Just so” stories.

2. *Minding Somebody Else’s Business and Sometimes Making It Your Own*

One of the storytellers’ favorite ways to get the action going is to have a character stir things up by bringing news to the neighborhood and thus getting the interest of other characters, sometimes making one of them angry. The collision of interests or wills then ignites the rest of the plot. The consequences of the coming of trouble are compounded because some people get full of themselves and feel the need to challenge everyone around them in regard to their success and importance. In “Mr. Bamancoo Gets Dropped” and “Tiger Becomes a Riding Horse” boasting turns into competition between two old friends about who is going to have the most girlfriends. The objective is to be the most successful in the courtship and even embarrass or kill off rival males.

3. *Getting a Comeuppance: How (And How Not) To Act Stories*

Notions of respect and reputation were very important in the Afro and African American communities. Respect given and received is particularly associated with family. Discussions of behaving good and bad are often directed to the head of households, who are expected not only to display how respectably they act but to point to others’ behavior as bad or rude. In most cases the stories are cautionary. They illustrate how disorderly and unmannerly people act, and what happens to them when they do. They are moral stories, often told in the form of how certain animals got to be the way they are because of their misbehavior. For example, in the tale “What Makes Brer Wasp Have a Short Patience,” the strange shape of the wasp is accounted for by his continued unmannerly laughing.

4. *How Clever Can You Get? Tales of Trickery And Its Consequences:*

These stories bring light to the gross immoralities of the Trickster. From the trickster’s perspective, actions are not to be judged in terms of their consequences but rather if he completes his venture. A number of stories illustrate the way the trickster establishes patterns of deceit and how others get caught when they try to imitate him. An example of this trait is found in the story “Crawling into the Elephant’s Belly.”

5. *The Strong Ones and The Clever: Contest and Confrontations*

The stories focus on the contest and the fights as the contestants in one way or another draw on the special powers coming from the un-human world. In the story “Golden Breasts, Diamond Navel, Chain of Gold” pigs with great magical powers of dance become magical helpers to the “Poor boy” and bring about eternal prosperity.

6. *Getting Around Old Master (Most of the Time)*

These stories are usually humorous and often subversive which report on a bold, brazen or subtle act in the face of the Master’s authority. In one story the slave has become an expert in stealing pigs because his master, Planter Hammond, would not give him any meat. One day Planter Hammond came to investigate the slave when he was in the middle of making pork stew. When Masta Hammond insisted on tasting the “possum stew” Grandpa responded by exclaiming how the possum was about done except for some spit. He then proceeded to spit into the stew. Masta Hammond was clearly upset. Papa replied, “Us black folks always spit in the possum gravy, makes the meat real tender.”

7. *In the End, Nonsense*

These stories are clownish routines that are often told in the first person. The wits of the community seem to feel free to break into any social situation with nonsense. They can almost be called “entertainment routines”. Few of the stories have a message. They are purely entertainment. Sometimes the routines focus on the strange sounds that animals make, as in Animal Talk” and underscore the ability of the performer to display his range of talents in building the sound effects in the story.

There are a vast number of folktales. A table has been constructed to categorize a selection of folktales by the recurring themes presented.

Afro-American Folktales Categorized by Themes			
Getting Things Started: How the World Got Put Together That Way	Minding Somebody Else’s Business and Sometimes Making It Your Own	Getting a Comeuppance: How (and How Not) To Act Stories	How Clever Can You Get? Tales of Trickery And its Consequences
Never Seen His Equal	Meeting the King of the World	What Makes Brer Wasp Have a Short	Why They Name the Stories for Anansi

The Man Makes and the Woman Takes	Mr. Bamancoo Gets Dropped	Patience	Brother Rabbit Takes a Walk
Bringing Men and Women Together	The Tug-of-War Between Elephant and Whale	Between the Fiddler and the Dancer	The Lion in the Well
The Fight Over Life	Tiger Becomes a Riding Horse	Being Greedy Chokes Anansi	A License to Steal
The Wind and the Water Fighting	The Telltale Pepper Bush	The Doings and Undoings of the Dogoshes	The Race between Toad and Donkey
The Word the Devil Made Up	Making the Stone Smoke	Spreading Fingers for Friendship	Crawling into the Elephant's Belly
The Knee-High Man tries To Go Sizeable	The Latest Song	Don't Shoot Me, Dyer, Don't Shoot Me	A Strange Way to Sleep
Getting Common Sense	The Signifying Monkey	Little Eight John	Goobers Gone, Rabbit Gone
	The Singing Bones	The Poor Man and the Snake	Assaulting All the Senses
	A Boarhog for a Husband	The Little Bird Grows	Brer Rabbit's Riddle
			The Horned Animals' Party

**Afro-American Folktales
Categorized by Themes**

The Strong Ones and the Clever: Contests and Confrontations	Getting Around Old Master (Most of the Time)	In the End, Nonsense	
Golden Breasts, Diamond Navel, Gold Chains	They Both Had Dead Horses	Big-Gut, Big Head, Stringy-Leg	
The Flying Contest	You Talk Too Much, Anyhow	A Chain of Won'ts	
Loggerhead	Making the Eyes Run	Animal Talk	
		A Comic	

Trying to Get the Goldstone	Making a Wagon from a Wheelbarrow	Conversation A Smoking Story	
Stackolee	The One-Legged Turkey	The Things That Talked	
Escaping, Slowly	John Outruns the Lord	Endings	
Turning into Nouna-Nothing	A Flying Fool		
The Old Bull and the Young One	Horses Stay Outside		
Fasting for the Hand of the Queen's Daughter	Competition for Laziness John Outwits Mr. Berkley Black Jack and White Jack		

As a member of the Arts and Music Academy, our goal is to integrate the arts into every facet of the curriculum. The majority of the students live in an economically depressed area. Of the five hundred and seventy, 7th and 8th graders in our school, 81.3 are eligible for the Federal Government Free or Reduced Lunch Program. The school is in partnership with a private management company. The racial/ethnic composition is 98.3 % African American, 0.7% Caucasian, 0.9% Latino and 0.2% are classified as "other". Approximately 111 students receive special education services. Many of the students are transient, transferring in and out of school during the year. The average attendance is 92%. We have a significant number of students who are in foster care or are with primary care givers other than biological parents.

What does this information have to do with this curriculum unit? Everything! The Arts and Music Academy has successfully integrated the arts across the curriculum. With the inclusion of dance, music, theater and visual arts, we have marked an improvement in behavior, fewer infractions and increased attendance. Students are eager to attend trips to the theater and some have participated in the local theater auditions. Our dance troupe has gained notoriety throughout the school district and the city. Our students are eager to perform or create. With all that our Arts and Music Academy has accomplished, there is a great need to continue to expose our students to a genre that has helped define their

greatness.

Objectives

The objectives of the unit include the following:

- To help students understand the background of a group of people and the art of storytelling.
- To encourage students to analyze and interpret African and Afro-American folktales.
- To encourage students to construct meanings as they read
- To have students identify the literary elements
- To help students become familiar with unfamiliar vocabulary
- To have students analyze literature and develop questions/ opinions as they read
- To have students make comparisons and contrast between characters
- To have students use graphic organizers to strengthen comprehension and organize ideas
- To use the creative performing arts to convey information to an audience.
- To have students create visual images

Strategies

The sample lessons which follow are geared toward showing a variety of approaches to developing basic skills using folktales. Each teacher brings their individual style and can adapt the samples to meet the needs of the students. The lesson plans are written for all three 8th grade Reading and Language Arts classes with varying reading levels from 3rd to 10th grade. The lesson plans can be modified to address differentiated instruction that is needed and very evident in most classrooms. However in keeping with the guidelines of the state standardized assessments, the test questions and essay questions will remain the same. Emphasis will be placed on teaching how to answer the questions adequately and thoroughly.

I will use several techniques that have been adopted by our school to enforce the “same school concept” across the curriculum. The strategies are outlined in the Before-During-After (BDA) chart.

Before Lesson/Reading
Build up their own background knowledge about the reading and the topic (KWL) Set purposes for reading Determine methods for reading, according to their purposes
During Lesson/Reading
Gain their complete attention to the reading task Check their own understanding constantly (Stop & Think, Stop & Predict) Monitor their own reading comprehension and do it so often that it is automatic

Stop to use a “fix-it” strategy when they do not understand
 Use semantic, syntactic and graph phonics cue to construct meanings of unfamiliar words
 Synthesize during reading
 Ask questions
 Talk to them during reading

After Lesson/Reading

Decide if they have achieved their goals for reading
 Evaluate their understanding of what they have read
 Summarize the major ideas and themes
 Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant ideas
 Paraphrase the text with what they have learned
 Reflect on and personalize the text
 Integrate new understandings and prior knowledge
 Use study strategies to retain new knowledge

Lesson One: Exploring the Origin of Folktales

Lesson overview: Folktales are an integral part of understanding one’s own culture and other cultures. This lesson will introduce students to folktales from various cultures. Students will be introduced to the historical context of how the art of storytelling originated with the slaves bringing their tales from their motherland and incorporating it in their new surroundings.

Instructional Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Explain the role folktales had in society
- Evaluate the usefulness of folktales in society today
- Complete a Folktale Chart
- Make character comparisons
- Compare the Yoruba creation myth with another version of the creation of the earth.

Materials:

- paper
- copies of Folktale Chart
- copies of Venn Diagram
- copies of “The Beginnings of Beginnings”
- copies of T-Chart

Instructional Plan

Vocabulary

Akan	baobab	culture	kingdom
Ananse/Anansi	coffers	descendant	primate
asset	cowry	empire	tradition
ethnic	Kiswahili	primitive	narrative
etymologist	maize	regalia	literature
exotic	nation	resource	attribute
generation	Nubia/Nubian	sub-Saharan	performance
Greco-Roman	paleontologist	superstition	folklore
Hausa	Pan-African	Swahili	legend
heir	population	tribal	ballad
indigenous	predecessor	Twi	
inhabitants	prehistoric	weaponry	

Introduce the concept of folktales by asking students to cooperatively brainstorm and create a definition of the word “folktale”. Ask the following questions:

What makes a story a folktale?

Why should we learn about them?

Why do adults continue to pass down the folktales to generation after generation of children?

Explain that folklore is the traditions, stories and customs passed down by word of mouth in a culture. Traditionally, this was oral tradition but increasingly today these traditions have been written down. Folktales are told in all cultures for basically the same reasons:

They keep the past alive.

They teach moral lessons and illustrate human characteristics that are valued.

They warn against negative qualities.

Folklore can be grouped into four main categories: myths, folktales, fables and legends. All of these contain specific defining attributes. Folktales will contain one or more of the following attributes.

A supernatural element – usually explains some basic questions about the world such as creation, humanity’s conditions, or other natural occurrences. Frequently there are gods or goddess who have exceptional powers, and make decisions that impact humanity.

Good triumphs over evil – desirable human qualities are rewarded in the end.

Foolish or dishonest characters are exposed. The story often teaches a lesson, and may state a moral outright.

Tricks played on character - tricks are played on a character, frequently poking fun at human weaknesses.

Stereotyped character (good, bad, foolish, tricky) – one or more characters are stereotyped as the example of human qualities (greed, curiosity, kindness, etc.).

- Moral lesson (theme) – illustrates a moral belief.
- Human characteristics in animals, objects or gods (personification) – characters may be animals or gods and goddesses who deal with the same weaknesses humans have such as greed, kindness, vanity, wealth, poverty, etc.
- Contains a hero or heroine – may contain a character who goes to extraordinary lengths to rescue another character.
- Explain some event in nature as in “Why” stories, explanations of events in nature such as rainbows, thunder, stripes on some animal, etc.
- Contains a love element – the story revolves around a character who seeks to find some lost love or to find love everlasting.
- Has a happy ending – the story ends in a way that brings victory to the honest “good” character or to all humanity.

Activities

Students will compare creation stories.

Teacher will give a brief historical context of Africa as related to the lesson.

Students will read a retelling of a Nigerian Yoruba folktale, *The Beginning of Beginnings* (See Appendix 1). This is a creation tale that reflects the Yoruba culture and presents Oduduwa, or Odudua, as the obedient son who creates earth and Obatala as the drunken ne’re-do-well, who fails to fulfill his father’s wishes. Students will complete a Folktale Chart on the *The Beginning of Beginnings*.(See Appendix 2)

Make a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two sons in the tale.

Discussion an Open-Ended Response Opportunity

How does this Yoruba creation myth compare to the other theories about how the world was formed?

Is this creation myth similar to any folktales or myths you have read or heard? Explain.

Why do you think people around the world, throughout history, have their own variation the creation story?

Using the book, *In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World* by Virginia Hamilton, students will research the Genesis creation account or a Greek, Roman, Norse, or Native American creation tale. Students will make a T-Chart showing the similarities and differences between the Yoruba another version of the foundation of the earth. Students will write a composition comparing and contrasting the Yoruba creation to another story of creation.

Assessments

Folktale Chart (Rubric) – see Appendix 3

Venn diagram (Rubric) – see Appendix 3

T-Chart (Rubric) – See Appendix 3

Comparative Essay (Rubric) – See Appendix 3

Pa. Standards: (See Appendix 4)

Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.8

Social Studies: #1, 2, 3, 4

Lesson Two: Exploring Common Themes in African American Folktales

Lesson Overview: In this lesson, students will explore how themes common to the human condition can be found in literary and oral traditions. Students will compile Afro-American folktales around these themes and write their own tales on these same themes to reflect their own cultural context.

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to:

Identify the common themes in folktales

Learn about the book “Nelson Mandela’s Favorite African Folktales” by reading and discussing the article “Once Upon A Time in Africa.”

In groups, read a collection of folktales from “Every Tongue Got to Confess” by Zora Neale Hurston, “The People Could Fly” by Virginia Hamilton and “Afro-American Folktales” by Roger D. Abrahams.

Create a large chart categorizing the folktales by themes.

Compose their own folk tales related to a chosen theme and illustrate. Folk tales will be compiled to create a published anthology of the folktales.

Materials:

journals

pen/pencils

paper

copies of the article “Once Upon A Time In Africa”

collection of folk tales

markers/crayons

paint

brushes

large chart paper

glue

scissors

Instructional Plan

Vocabulary

embodying

allure

distinctive

anthology

improvised

embellished

apartheid

modest

fused

royalties

realism

continuum

conventional

Introduce the common themes of folktales by listing the eight categories designed by Abrahams on chart paper:

Getting Things Started: How the world got put together that way.
 Minding Somebody's Else's Business and Sometimes Making it Your Own.
 Getting a Comeuppance: How (And How Not) To Act Stories
 How Clever Can You Get? Tales of Trickery and Its Consequence
 The Strong Ones and The Clever: Contest and Confrontations
 Getting Around Old Master (Most of the Time)
 In the End, Nonsense

Conduct a brief discussions based on the following questions:

Why do you think these themes come up so often in these types of stories?
 What does this tell you about human nature?
 Do you think these themes exist across cultures? Why or why not?
 What is difference between reading a story and hearing it read aloud?
 Which do you prefer and why?

As a class read and discuss the article "Once Upon A Time in Africa," focusing in the following questions:

What is found in the book "Nelson Mandela's Favorite African Folktales"?
 Why does Henry Louis Gates, Jr., think that the time is right to publish this collection of folk tales?
 What are the themes of the stories in this book?
 What does Mr. Gates think of the state of African oral tradition?
 What did Jason Berry say about "African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World" when it was published?
 According to the author of the article, how is this book's reception different from the reaction to "African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World"?

Divide students into groups of three or four. Distribute a collection of folktales by Hurston, Hamilton and Abrahams. Explain that each group will read the collections and categorize the tales by Abrahams' themes. The group will construct a large chart depicting the themes.

After the group folk tale compilation project is over, each student will write his or her own folktale. The folktale is to be written using modern present day language. For example, if the theme is Getting Things Started, the student might write a tale of "How the Internet Started or How the Phone Lost Its Cord". The student will illustrate their tale either using free hand drawing or computer generated drawings. The folktales will published and collated to create a class anthology.

Assessment:

Group Theme Chart (Rubric) – See Appendix 3
 Modern Folktale (Rubric) – See Appendix 3

Pa. Standards – See Appendix 4

Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5,
 Visual Arts: 1, 2, 6

Lesson Three: The People Could Fly

Lesson Overview: This unit is an integration of Literature and American History. It is an introduction to slavery, immigration routes of slaves and the agricultural economy of the south through slave labor. It ties into literature through an African folktale, "The People Could Fly." This lesson is designed for an 8th grade inclusion class. Half of the students are special education students who have been integrated into a regular education classroom. The remaining half are students who do not receive special education services but whose reading levels are about the same of the special education population. The average reading level of the student is 3rd -5th grade. Through literature the students will enrich their vocabulary, analyze cause and effect relationships, recall sequence of events, summarize use context clues and make inferences.

Lesson Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- 31 Understand that characters undergo a transformation due to events in the story.
- 32 Predict outcomes
- 33 Use context clues
- 34 Analyze cause and effect throughout the story

Materials

- 31 Copy of The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales
- 32 chart paper
- 33 journal books
- 34 paper
- 35 glue
- 36 scissors

Instructional Plan

Vocabulary

hoe	overseer	glinty	scorned
soothe	holler	misery	bawl
snarl	seize	gaze	flock

seer croon

Day One: Skill Focus – Predicting Outcomes and Context Clues

1. Students will make predictions about what the story is about based on the front cover and the title. Students will write the predictions in their journal and volunteers will share with the class.
2. Introduce the new vocabulary
3. The teacher will read the story “The People Could Fly” aloud to the class. Students are asked to pay special attention to the following:
 - a. Page 168: Ask the students what they see in this picture. The answers should include: a cotton plantation, Sarah and the baby, Toby, Overseer on horseback, other slaves in the background.
 - b. Page 170: Discuss what is happening just by looking at the picture. Answers should include: Toby, Overseer on horseback with a whip and slaves that are rising up to the sky.
4. Students will respond to the prompt in their journals (3-5 minutes). Writing Prompt: “Write about something that surprised you, confused you, annoyed you, fascinated you, or reminded you of something”
5. Students will use context clues from the folktale to help with new vocabulary. Copy the following chart on a chart paper as students do the same with 8 1/2 x 11” paper.

Title: The People Could Fly			
Word Prediction	Clues	Vocabulary Word	Actual Definition

6. On a transparency, write excerpts from the story leaving out the vocabulary words. Students will try to determine what word would fit in the blank. An example: “Sarah hoed and chopped the row as the babe on her back slept. Say the child grew hungry. That babe started up _____ too loud. Sarah couldn’t stop to feed it. Couldn’t stop to _____ and quiet it down. She let it cry. She didn’t want to. She had no heart to _____ to it.
7. Prompt the students to come up with a word that would fit in the blank. Students will write down at least one word in the prediction column and a

clue. On the chart paper, the teacher will list all the predictions and the clues. In the third column write the correct word and have a student look up the definition. Have students check for accuracy.

Day Two: Skill Focus – Cause and Effect

- 1 Reread the “The People Could Fly” aloud. Discuss with the students the meaning of freedom is very different in this story. For example, on page 170, when the slaves ‘rose high in the sky, which is interpreted as having freedom because they are no longer on earth. Discuss the causes and effects within the story. Students will cut out the following sentences and place each in the appropriate column (cause or effect).

The slaves were not working fast enough.
 The Driver cracked his whip over the slow ones.
 The child began to bawl too loud.
 The child was hungry.
 The young man slave fell from the heat of the sun.
 It was dead hot in the cotton fields.
 The Driver used his whip to hit Sarah’s legs.
 Her legs bled into the earth.
 Sarah was weak.
 Sarah could not stand up straight.
 Sarah was weak.
 Sarah was starvin’.
 Sarah rose to the sky.
 Toby said the magic words “Kum..yali, kum, buba tambe!”
 The Overseer wanted to seize Toby.
 Toby said the magic words “Kum...yali, kum buba tambe!”
 Toby did not teach everyone to fly.
 Not everyone flew away to freedom.
 No one believe it.
 No one would speak about it.

Cause	Effect
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

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Day Three: Skill Focus – Sequence of Events

1. Discuss the sequence of events in the story, “The People Could Fly”.
2. Divide the class into groups of three or four students.
3. Give each group a set of sentence strips containing the sequence of events. (See below)
4. Students will work as a group to place the sentence strips on chart paper in sequential order with a certain amount of time. The group will present their chart to the class. The group with the correct sequence of events will win a prize.

Events

Sarah fell to the ground and was too weak to stand up straight.

The Overseer and Driver tried to capture Toby.

Toby began saying the magical words and Sarah rose to the sky.

The Overseer hit the baby with a whip.

Sarah’s baby began to cry because it was hungry.

Toby began to fly to freedom with the other slaves who could fly.

Sarah was in the field working with her babe on her back.

The Driver hit Sarah’s legs with his whip when she did not get up off the ground.

Toby began to recite the magical words after slaves began to pass out from the heat.

Many slaves began to fall to the ground because of the heat.

Assessment

Journal Entries (Rubric) – See Appendix 3

Vocabulary Chart (Rubric) – See Appendix 3

Cause and Effect Chart (Rubric) – See Appendix 3

Sequence Chart – Class Participation (Rubric) – See Appendix 3

Pa. Standards – See Appendix 4

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening – 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.7

Social Studies - #1, 4

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

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Appendix 1

The Beginning of Beginnings (Retelling of a Nigerian Yoruba Myth)

In the beginning of all beginnings, only water lay beneath the skies. Olorun ruler

of earth and sky, desired a foundation on the earth below to allow his two sons to walk the earth and rule over it. Accordingly, Olorun dropped a seedling palm tree from the sky. Oh, so quickly the palm tree grew, reaching its branches upward toward the sky and stretching them wide as a mother's arms waiting to embrace her child. After the tree grew to its fullness, Olorun called his two sons, Oduduwa and Obatala, to his side.

"Sons, look below. All that you see will be yours. Take this bag; it holds all you need to create land. Then I will let down the golden cord and lower you to the branches of the palm tree. Behave prudently, my sons. You have only this one chance to change the water into soil. On this land your people will plant trees, grow food, build huts, hunt animals, dance, and play, all for your pleasure. Are you ready to go below?"

"Yes, Father," Oduduwa promptly agreed.

Obatala, shiftless as the least of all hyenas, gave the chief no answer but unenthusiastically followed his brother, Oduduwa, to the golden cord. Olorun bid his sons farewell and sent them down to earth. As soon as foolish Obatala reached the palm tree's branches, he tapped the tree for its wine, made himself drunk, and fell to the bottom of the tree. Little by little water covered his face. To this day irresponsible Obatala lives beneath the waters.

Faithful to his task, Oduduwa climbed down to the bottom of the palm tree and examined the bag his father had given him. In the bag he found sand white as salt, black soil, a chameleon, and a hen. He reached into the bag, took out handfuls of the white sand, and scattered it over the face of the water. Then he set the chameleon down to test the surface of the water. Seeing that the earth still needed firmness, Oduduwa emptied the black soil from the bag and onto the ground, set the hen on the soil, and watched as the hen scratched the ground, spreading the fertile soil across the land.

In Obatala's watery domain, fish crocodile, and other creatures swam and hippotamuses bathed. On the fertile soil, Oduduwa cultivated maize given to him by his father, Olorun, and grew other crops to feed his people. Dense tropical forests of rubber trees, palm trees, walnut trees, mahogany, and eucalyptus provided a haven for the varied for the varied collection of wild animals who roamed freely: elephants, baboons, gorillas, lions, monkeys, leopards, zebras, elands, vultures and cheetahs. The earth, pregnant with promise, flourished.

Pleased with the eldest son's wisdom and obedience, Olorun proclaimed Oduduwa first ruler of Yorubaland. He sent Oduduwa additional gifts, cowries and bars of iron, as a sign of his pleasure. Best of all, Olorun presented his son with a wife. Oduduwa and his wife enjoyed a fine life ruling Yorubaland. They drank of the palm wine, ate the maize they planted, used the palm tree's oil for cooking, adorned themselves with necklaces and bracelets from the cowries, and formed tools to hunt, skin animals, fish and defend their land. Oduduwa's wife gave birth to robust sons and daughters whose skin was the dusky hue of baobab tree bark and who presented them with many grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren. You might say Oduduwa is the ancient grandfather of the grandfathers I never knew. This is the story of the beginning of beginnings.

Appendix 2

Folk Tale Chart

Title	
Origin (country, culture)	
Setting (time, place, environment)	
Main characters	
Plot	
Conflict (problem)	
Resolution (How is the conflict solved or resolved?)	
Theme/Moral (main idea/lesson learned)	
Similar Stories (List any similar fairy tales, fables, myths)	
Explain the similarity	

Appendix 3- Rubrics

Graphic Organizer/ Prewriting Strategy Rubric		
Advanced	4	Exceeds expectations Shows creativity
Proficient	3	Follows directions Shows effort Has required number of entries or ideas
Basic	2	Has less than required ideas of entries Appears messy

		Shows lack of effort or thought
Below Basic	1 0	Does not address the topic Does not follow directions Was not submitted

Open-Ended Short Answer Rubric		
Advanced	4	Fully and reasonably addresses the question. Supports answer with many specific Relevant details, quotes, etc. from the text. Shows higher level thinking skills
Proficient	3	Answers major parts of the question Gives some support from the text Shows comprehension of the text
Basic	2	Attempts to answer the question in a general way Answers incorrectly or cites incorrect, irrelevant details from text Fails to support answer with evidence from the text
Below Basic	1 0	Does not answer the question asked Incorrectly answers the question Gives no response

Writing Prompt Rubric		
Advanced	4	Expertly addresses the prompt Is well organized Supports ideas with a wealth or relevant, in-depth and creative elaboration Uses unique figurative language, vivid images, and advanced vocabulary Is well written with no or almost no errors
Proficient	3	Effectively addresses the prompt Is well organized Supports ideas with above average vocabulary and descriptions

		Has no major errors and few minor errors
Basic	2	Addresses the prompt Is loosely organized Generically extends ideas with minimal or zero elaboration Uses average vocabulary Has some major and minor errors that distract from writing
Below Basic	1	Vaguely addresses the prompt Lacks organization Uses slang, informal language or inappropriate vocabulary Has frequent major and minor errors
	0	The composition does not address the prompt Is too brief to evaluate Shows no control of the English language Gives no response

Appendix 4 –Pennsylvania Academic Standards

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

Learning to Read Independently.....	1.1
<i>Purpose for Reading</i>	<i>Comprehension and Interpretation</i>
<i>Word Recognition</i>	<i>Fluency</i>
<i>Vocabulary Development</i>	
Reading Critically in All Content Areas.....	1.2
<i>Details</i>	<i>Inferences</i>
<i>Fact from Opinion</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
<i>Analysis and Evaluation</i>	
Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature.....	1.3
<i>Literary Elements</i>	<i>Literary Devices</i>
<i>Poetry</i>	<i>Drama</i>
Types of Writing.....	1.4
<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Informational</i>
Quality of Writing.....	1.5

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Style</i>
<i>Content</i>	<i>Conventions</i>
<i>Organizations</i>	
Speaking and Listening.....	1.6
<i>Listening Skills</i>	<i>Speaking Skills</i>
<i>Discussions</i>	<i>Presentations</i>
Characteristics and Functions of the English Language.....	1.7
<i>Word Origins</i>	<i>Variations</i>
<i>Applications</i>	
Research.....	1.8
<i>Selection</i>	<i>Location of Information</i>
<i>Organization</i>	

Social Studies Standards

- #1 Culture – Demonstrate an understanding of culture and how culture affects the individual and society.
- #2 Decisions, Time, Continuity and Change – Analyze historical events, conditions, trends and issues to understand the way human beings view themselves, their institutions, and others, now and over time, to enable them to make informed choices and decisions.
- #3 People, Places and Environment – Apply geographic skills and knowledge to demonstrate an understanding of geography affects people, places, movement and environment.
- #4 Individuals, Groups and Institutions – Demonstrate an understanding of the role of individuals groups and institutions and how their actions and interactions exert powerful influences on society.
- #5 Power, Authority and Governance – Understand and communicate the ideas and mechanism developed to meet the needs of citizens, manage conflict and connect individuals and groups in the process of change.

Visual Arts Standards

- #1 Understand and apply art media, techniques and processes
- #2 Demonstrate knowledge of elements, principles and expressive features from diverse historical periods and cultures, especially African, Asian/Pacific, European, Latino and Native American cultures
- #3 Recognize, select and evaluate a variety of subject matter, symbols and ideas from diverse cultures and historical periods, especially African, Asian/Pacific, European, Latino and Native American cultures in making works of art
- #4 Understand the visual arts and artifacts in relation to historical, social and cultural contexts, especially African, Asian/Pacific, European, Latino and Native American cultures
- #5 Use the visual arts and artifacts as a way of understanding ourselves and our

communities.