WHY IN THE WORLD? POURQUOI STORIES

Subject Matter: Language Arts
Grade Levels: 6-8
Time Allotment: Two 60-minute class sessions
Master Teacher: Sharon Porter

Overview

Tales that explain "why" are called pourquoi tales. Pronounced "poor-kwa" by the French, these "why" stories have been shared through the centuries to explain nature and natural phenomena. Pourquoi stories reveal cultural traditions from Australia to Zimbabwe. The famous "Just So" stories by Rudyard Kipling are examples of modern pourquoi tales. In this lesson, students will hear pourquoi stories and identify the literary elements that make up pourquoi stories. Using knowledge of these elements, students will compare pourquoi stories for commonalities, generate a chart for gathering more information to write their own pourquoi tales and then draft their own tales.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the sequence of events in an oral or written story.
- Write a pourquoi tale based on the defining elements learned in this lesson.
- Illustrate the story using an illustrative method of choice (e.g., a drawing, Kid Pix presentation or spoken recording).

Oregon Standards Available at:

http://www.ode.state.or.us/cifs

English - Reading

Demonstrate literal comprehension of a variety of printed materials.

- Identify sequence of events, main ideas, facts, supporting details and opinions in literary, informative and practical selections.
- Examine relationships, images, patterns or symbols to draw conclusions about their meanings in printed material.

English - Literature

Read a variety of literary forms (e.g., novels, poems, plays, short stories, autobiographies, essays) of varying complexity from a variety of cultures and time periods.

- Read a variety of literary works and distinguish among characteristics of a variety of literary forms, including novels, short stories, poetry, plays and nonfiction from a variety of cultures and time periods.

Understand how literature is influenced by historical, cultural, social and biographical factors.

Media Components

Video

Check the link at http://www.opb.org/edmedia/trs/ to find access to the video(s) from unitedstreaming™ referenced in this lesson plan.

- "Native American Folktales" (22:00)
  - o **Clip:** "Storytelling Stone (Seneca)" (06:24)

- "African and African-American Folktales" (20:00)
  - o **Clip:** "How Anansi Obtained the Sky God's Stories" (04:56)

Web
- **Why Cats Wash After They Eat - Pourquoi Story for Telling**
  This Web page hosts Elizabeth Ellis telling this African-American story (for use as a model for the introductory activity).
  http://www.epfl.net/kids/estories/ESTORIES_Tale.cfm?id=33

- **Versions of a Story - Venn Diagram**
  This handout is used to compare the two video clips of pourquoi stories used in this lesson.
  http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_images/lesson406/BlankVen.pdf

- **Interactive Timeline**
  At this Internet site, students can map the sequence of events for their own stories.
  http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/timeline/

- **Homework Center of the Multnomah County Library: Animals**
  At this Internet site, students will find plenty of research information about animals.
  http://www.multcolib.org/homework/animhc.html

- **Story Template for a PowerPoint Presentation**
  Using a template may help your students organize their stories faster. Here is a starter that you can download and use to help your students launch their own ideas:
  http://www.teacheruniverse.com/tools/integrate_projects/fairy_tales/Story_Template.ppt

- **Portaportal**
  Use this free Web site to help keep track of your bookmarks to interactive Internet sites you will use for this lesson. It will help keep the students organized and focused, and your bookmarks will always be there for you no matter what computer you are using!
  http://www.portaportal.com

- **Scoring Guides for Pourquoi Stories**
  Use these scoring guides for the various "products" you may have for the Culminating Activity.
  http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/pptrubric.html for PowerPoint presentations
  http://www.bcpl.net/%7Esullivan/modules/tips/rubrics_sec/skit.html for a skit
  http://www.ode.state.or.us/asmt/scoring/guides/student/mswrtg.pdf for middle school writing (Oregon)

Materials

Per Student:

- Pencil and paper (draft and final product)
- Notecards
- Handout: Versions of a Story - Venn Diagram which can be downloaded from
  http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_images/lesson406/BlankVen.pdf
- Computer with Internet access and printer
- KidPix or PowerPoint software installed on computers for student use (optional)

Per Class:

- Overhead transparency of the Venn Diagram found at
  http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_images/lesson406/BlankVen.pdf
- Overhead projector and overhead projector markers (three colors would be nice)
- A set of *Zoobook* magazines for reference (optional)
- Access to library reference materials for researching facts on animals. Examples are:
  - National Geographic's *Animal Encyclopedia*
  - General encyclopedias (*World Book*, *Collier's*, etc.)
  - Homework Center Web Site: http://www.multcolib.org/homework/animhc.html
- Crayons, colored pencils and drawing paper
- Demonstration computer with Internet connectivity and projection screen for whole group instruction

- Computer on a cart for displaying KidPix or PowerPoint presentations (optional)

Prep for Teachers

When using media, provide students with a **Focus for Media Interaction**, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video, Web sites or other multimedia elements.

Session 1: Bookmark all Web sites in Portaportal and download video clips. Preview them for specific points you will use to compare the two pourquoi stories. Schedule the computer lab or mobile lab and allow one computer per student. Check to see if QuickTime and Windows Media Player are installed on the demonstration computer you will use for instruction. You will also need to download Real Player and Shockwave for your Internet browser. These are found at http://www.real.com and http://www.macromedia.com. Make sure that this computer can be connected to a projector or a large-screen monitor for whole group instruction. Make a copy of the Versions of a Story - Venn Diagram handout for each student and an overhead transparency of the handout for group use. This can be downloaded from http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_images/lesson406/BlankVen.pdf

Session 2: Schedule time in the library for at least 15 minutes of research time or you may provide reference materials in the classroom. Again, be sure that students can access your Portaportal account for the bookmarks to the Interactive Timeline found at http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/timeline/ and the Multnomah County Library Homework Center at http://www.multcolib.org/homework/animhc.html.

Introductory Activity

Step 1: When class begins, explain that it's human nature to ask the question "why?" When we were little children, "why?" was asked quite a lot. What kinds of things did we ask "why?" about? What was the reaction from others when asked "why?" Is it usually a positive or negative experience? Is it good to ask "why?" When should we stop asking "why?" Show on the blackboard that people all over the world have asked questions about the world by using these words:
warum (German)
porqué (Spanish and Portuguese)
perchè (Italian)
pourquoi (French)

Tell the students that there is a particular kind of story to explain why natural events occur in the world: "They are called pourquoi stories. They begin with a reference to a time long ago and they end with the answer to the 'why' of the story. Oh, let's just hear an example."

Step 2: Tell the story "Why Cats Wash After They Eat." Use the model found at http://www.epfl.net/kids/estories/ESTORIES_Tale.cfm?id=33. As a **Focus for Media**

Interaction, ask students to see if they can identify the three elements of the pourquoi story once the story has been told.

Step 3: After the telling of the story, ask the students if they can identify the three elements of the story you just told. (Begins with a statement like "a long-time ago"; the topic is an observation of nature; it ends with the statement "and that is why." In this case, "that's why cats wash after they eat.")

Learning Activities

Session 1

Step 1: Say to the students: "Let's see a version of a pourquoi story from the Native American Seneca tradition." As a **Focus for Media Interaction**, note the three elements we discussed as necessary for a story to be a pourquoi story. Take notes about the plot, characters, setting and timeline on the Versions of a Story handout found at http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_images/lesson406/BlankVen.pdf. The notes can be pictures or text or both. Instruct students to take notes on the left side of the bottom half of the paper, avoiding the circle areas.

Step 2: Play the video clip, "Storytelling Stone (Seneca)" (06:24), from the video, "Native American Folktales" (22:00).

Step 3: As a check for comprehension, ask students to state the three elements that make up a pourquoi story. Correct as necessary.

Step 4: Say to the students: "Now let's see another pourquoi story from the African-American tradition. View the video clip, "How Anansi Obtained the Sky God's Stories" (04:56), from the video, "African and African-American Folktales" (20:00). As a **Focus for Media Interaction**, students will use the Versions of a Story handout found at http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_images/lesson406/BlankVen.pdf to record notes as the narrative progresses with this video clip. Instruct students to take notes on the right side of the bottom half of the paper, avoiding the circle areas. Allow time for students to record all their thoughts before moving on.

Step 5: Ask students to compare what is unique about each story and enter those descriptions in the large circle areas. Label each large bubble with the name of the story on each side to keep them distinct. In the overlapping section have the students declare what is the same about both stories and enter those descriptions in the small area. Have the students share their answers while you record them on your overhead transparency version of the handout. Emphasize that the descriptions or elements in the overlapping sections are the essential elements they will keep in mind when creating their own pourquoi stories.

Similarities to look for are: theme of beginning of stories; tasks to perform; gods are involved; there are tasks and sacrifices; long time ago; bag for stories; both characters are determined; stories are placed in the world to learn from.

Differences are: cultures are different; Anansi was clever in a mischievous way while Flying Crow was clever to hunt and survive; Nyami, the god, did not trust Anansi to share the stories, but Flying Crow was the teller of the stories to pass along to the generations.

Session 2

In this session, each student will conduct research, develop a sequence of events for their story and create/write a pourquoi story of their own.

Step 1: Before conducting research, spend a couple of minutes brainstorming how the pourqoui story can begin. Here are some suggestions:

Once upon a time …
In a time long ago …
Before we could remember …
Once, in another time …
Once, when the world was new …

The ending is easy. Ask the students if they remember how the storyteller ended the story about the cat washing after dinner. (You just repeat the "why" question: "And that is why the bear has a stubby tail.")

Step 2: The students need a few minutes to research an animal and develop an idea. The *Zoobook* magazines are great to generate a few facts about an animal. Remind students that facts about an animal or a scientific phenomenon lend richness to a story. They make readers remember more of the story and make it more interesting to hear. Distribute a notecard to each student. On the notecard, students will write their "why" questions and three supporting facts to use for the sequence of events in the next step.

For example: Why Do Lions Roar?
   1. Lions roar to alert others of danger.
   2. They roar to show dominance.
   3. Sometimes they roar just for fun!

Step 3: When students finish their notecards, they may proceed to the computers to access the Interactive Timeline found at: http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/timeline/. As a **Focus for Media Interaction**, have each student use their notecards to help them create and determine a sequence of events for the story they are writing. They need to title the story "Why …" and type their name into the box that is labeled "by." They need to pull down the menu that is labeled "Units" and choose "Events." To create events, type a very short (two to three word) event

identifier in the "Event" box. This creates the label that will show on the timeline. The "Title" box is used to introduce the details of the event. It can be left blank. The "Description" box is very important. In it, the student will develop the details of the event as a move toward the narrative of the story. Here is where the researched details from the notecard will come into play. Editing can be done by clicking on an event on the timeline. When the student needs a new event, click on the "Next Entry" label at the upper right-hand side of the Web page.

Step 4: When all events are entered, click on the "Finish" label and print the page, using the "Vertical" printing mode.

Step 5: Using the printout page from the Interactive Timeline in Step 3, students can then write their story in narrative form. Some students may elect to draw and narrate their stories using KidPix or PowerPoint. If time permits, this is a great choice for kinetic learners. There is a very useful PowerPoint template found at
http://www.teacheruniverse.com/tools/integrate_projects/fairy_tales/Story_Template.ppt

The stories can be peer-edited or submitted for teacher review. The following scoring guides may be used for assessment:
>   http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/pptrubric.html for PowerPoint presentations
>   http://www.bcpl.net/%7Esullivan/modules/tips/rubrics_sec/skit.html for a skit
>   http://www.ode.state.or.us/asmt/scoring/guides/student/mswrtg.pdf for middle school writing (Oregon)

Culminating Activity

Have the students post their stories in a public place after sharing with Book Buddies or another classroom. The students who have elected to create their story using a KidPix or PowerPoint presentation can have their shows available for Parent Night or in the hallway or library for viewing by others. After the hallway displays are viewed for two weeks, bind the stories in a binder and present to the library media staff for the library collection.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

Science

- Students can locate pourquoi stories and then research the scientific explanations for the same events. These comparisons can be posted side-by-side for a display. Graphics from magazines can be used to lend visual appeal.

Social Science - Geography

- A world map can have titles of pourqoui stories pinned to their place of origin.

Art

- The students can illustrate their stories after the narrative has been written. Many mediums can be employed. Animation using a flip book created by frame-by-frame action would be interesting.

Music

- Using percussion instruments and simple tuned instruments (marimbas, for example), the students in pairs can create an accompaniment to the story as it is read. Writing down a score for when the instruments play would be an excellent music theory application.

Community Connections

- Guest storytellers could be invited to perform stories in an assembly for the students. Original stories from the students can be interspersed in the performance.

- Students can share their stories during a retirement community event, retired teachers' meeting or other civic organization event. The stories could be posted at local banks and credit unions. Some restaurants host student work.

- A local access television network would be an avenue for the acting out or reading of student stories.