Here's How I Heard It

Using Folklore to Improve Close Reading Skills

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Grade Level	9th – 11th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	150 minutes
Course	American Literature, World Literature		

Essential Question

How can we connect works of literature to similar works from other cultures? What literary tools can we use to approach any work of literature, regardless of genre?

Summary

The art of storytelling is a common thread that runs through the history of virtually every culture. Each group of people has its own traditions, beliefs, and perspectives. These traditions have been passed down for generations through word of mouth, what historians call the oral tradition. This lesson will use folklore to take students through a study of story analysis. Students will learn to infer meaning, identify genre-specific characteristics, and will attempt to connect works of literature to similar works from other cultures. The skills developed as a result of this lesson will equip students with literary tools with which they can approach any work of literature, regardless of genre. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 9th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 9 through 11, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students journal to connect their prior experiences to the folklore genre.

Explore

Students explore characteristics of fables and make inferences in order to determine the moral of a story.

Explain

Students read and annotate folktales.

Extend

Students determine characteristics of folktales and connect folktales from various cultures and geographic regions.

Evaluate

Students use the previously learned skills of identifying characteristics, applying notation, inferring meaning, and comparing stories as they read and analyze a tall tale.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.2.R.2: Identify characteristics of genres and analyze how they enhance comprehension of fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction.
9.3.R.6: Analyze how informational text structures support the author's purpose.
9.3.R.7: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics, using textual evidence to support their claims and inferences.

Attachments

- Fables—Heres How I Heard It - Spanish.docx
- Fables—Heres How I Heard It - Spanish.pdf
- Fables—Heres How I Heard It.docx
- Fables—Heres How I Heard It.pdf
- Folk Teacher Resources—Heres How I Heard It.docx
- Folk Teacher Resources—Heres How I Heard It.pdf
- Folktales—Heres How I Heard It - Spanish.docx
- Folktales—Heres How I Heard It - Spanish.pdf
- Folktales—Heres How I Heard It.docx
- Folktales—Heres How I Heard It.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Heres How I Heard It.pptx
- Myths—Heres How I Heard It - Spanish.docx
- Myths—Heres How I Heard It - Spanish.pdf
- Myths—Heres How I Heard It.docx
- Myths—Heres How I Heard It.pdf
- Tall Tales—Heres How I Heard It - Spanish.docx
- Tall Tales—Heres How I Heard It - Spanish.pdf
- Tall Tales—Heres How I Heard It.docx
- Tall Tales—Heres How I Heard It.pdf

Materials

- Writing materials: pen, pencil, paper, etc.
- Folk Handouts: Fable, Tall Tale, Folktale, Myth (attached; one per student)
- Folk Teacher Resources (attached)
- Lesson slides (attached)

Engage

Content Background Information Required:

Students and teachers will benefit from having a basic idea of story structure. The lesson "The Anatomy of a Story" in the K20 LEARN repository gives teachers and students a basic framework of story structure.

Begin this lesson by going over the essential question and lesson objectives on **slides 3-4** in the attached **Lesson Slides**. Then, start with a discussion. If your students are used to journaling, you may want to pose this question as a journaling topic. Display **slide 5** and ask the students to comment on the following questions:

- Can you think of a story your parents told you as a child that turned out to not be true? (Santa, Tooth Fairy, Easter Bunny, etc.)
- How did you feel when you found out it was not true?
- Why do you think your parents would do something like that?
- What was the purpose in telling you stories like this? Were they just being mean?

Have students volunteer their responses. This can be a discussion, or they may want to read journal entries. Either way, it may be beneficial for you, as the teacher, to start the discussion with your own experience.

Direct the discussion in such a way that everyone comes to the conclusion that these types of stories were used to establish our ideas of right and wrong. The purpose was for us, as children, to learn that there are rewards for behaving, for being kind, and in the case of the Tooth Fairy, for enduring the pain of having a tooth pulled.

These types of stories are one example of folklore. Display **slide 6** and explain that there are many different types of stories that can be classified as folklore. This lesson will use folklore as a vehicle to teach students some very important reading strategies. The skills learned as a result of this lesson will be extremely valuable tools that students can use, regardless of the type of stories they are asked to analyze in future classes and standardized testing situations.

Teacher's Note

All of the handouts have also been provided with answers for the teacher in the **"Folk Teacher Resources" attachment**. With each new handout, the students will be learning a new literary analysis skill that they will be asked to use throughout the course of the lesson.

Explore

Display **slide 7** and ask students the following questions:

- If we were to read a story together, would everyone in here have the same reaction to what happens in the story?
- Would we all agree on the lesson we should learn from the story?
- Why or why not?

Give students a chance to discuss these questions. It is important to let them come to their own conclusions, even if you feel that they are incorrect.

Give students the **Fables** handout. As you are handing out the sheet, display **slide 8** and ask the students: Does anyone know what a fable is? Allow students to answer. They may offer examples, or it may so happen that none of them has a working knowledge of what a fable is. After the students volunteer responses, or none of the students offer an answer, ask them: Has anyone heard of Aesop's Fables? You can also trigger their memories by offering examples such as "The Tortoise and the Hare."

Now have the students turn their attention to the handout. It is important to note that the students do not have directions on any of the handouts for this lesson. Read through the characteristics of a fable located at the top of the handout. Take a moment to clarify any of the characteristics about which students may have questions.

Read through the first fable together. Explain to the students that although a concluding moral has been given at the end of this story, you want them to offer their own interpretation or lesson that can be learned from the fable.

The next two fables have not been concluded with a moral. Read through the next fable together as a class. You may read it yourself, but it is always a good idea to ask for student volunteers.

After the fable has been read to the class, ask the students:

- What lesson or moral can we learn from this fable?
- Does anyone have another perspective, another suggestion as to what we might learn from this fable?

Teacher's Note

A good way to encourage student participation is to remind them that there are no wrong answers in a discussion, as long as they have a reason for their answer. It is always a good practice to ask specific students to volunteer answers. Give them the option to answer without forcing them. Encourage students who have different opinions to speak up.

Follow this same process with the third fable.

Once the students have all had a chance to share their thoughts, explain to them that this technique of inferring meaning can be done with any type of story.

Teacher's Note

The ability to infer meaning is a skill that will be used throughout the rest of the lesson. Students will be practicing this skill repeatedly in the next three handouts, in addition to learning other valuable literary analysis skills.

Once you feel that the students have a basic understanding, tell them that you are going to move on.

Explain

Give students the **Tall Tales** handout. As you are handing out the sheet, display **slide 9** and ask the students:

- Can anyone tell me what a tall tale is?

Allow students to answer. They may offer examples, or it may so happen that none of them have a working knowledge of what a tall tale is. After students have shared their responses, or if none of the students offer an answer, then ask them:

- Has anyone heard the stories of Paul Bunyan, Davy Crocket, or Daniel Boone?
- What makes these stories different from other stories?

Teacher's Note

You want to lead the discussion toward an agreement that these types of stories depend heavily on exaggeration.

Read through the characteristics of a tall tale located at the top of the handout.

Students will inevitably have questions about the blue symbols at the end of each characteristic. Rather than immediately explaining what they are for, ask the students:

- What do you think is the purpose of these symbols at the end of each sentence in the tall tale description?
- How can we use these symbols to better understand the story as we read?

Allow students to offer their suggestions. Even if the students are incorrect, encourage their responses by saying something like, “That is an interesting idea.”

Tell the students that these symbols are called notation devices and that they are a quick and easy way to take notes over something while you read it.

Now display **slide 10** and have them look at the symbol used for each characteristic.

Explain to them that although these symbols were already created for them, there are not specific symbols that a reader must use every time they create notation devices for themselves. These letters and symbols were used because they in some way represented the characteristic for which they stand.

Now take students step-by-step through the notation process for the tall tale. The major characteristic that sets tall tales apart from other stories is that tall tales depend heavily on exaggeration. With that in mind, it may be best to start by having students looking for over-exaggerations in the story.

Teacher's Note

It should be noted that this process takes time to learn. Because notation is a new concept for many students, it may be beneficial to only have them looking for one or two of the characteristics at a time. To help students through the process, pause periodically as you read to ask students what they are finding.

Now that everyone has heard the story, read it again. This time, ask students to look for specific characteristics that make this story a tall tale.

- As the story is read aloud, have students write an "X" in the margin any time the story uses an exaggeration to explain something.
- Have students write an "F" in the margin any time the story attempts to explain something as though it were a fact. Remember, one key characteristic of a tall tale is that the narrator will often tell the story as though it really happened.
- Have students write an "S" in the margin any time the narrator of the story, or the characters within the story, use slang or dialect. This story of Paul Bunyan has many examples of this, so it isn't necessary for students to mark all of them.
- Have students write an "N" in the margin whenever they come across a part of the story in which something in nature is created.

Once the notation process has been completed, have students practice the skill they learned in the previous handout. Ask the students:

- Is there a valuable lesson or moral we can learn from this story?

Direct the discussion to help students come to the consensus that this story is simply meant to be entertaining, and that it does not contain many valuable life lessons.

- Now that we have decided that this story is only meant to be funny and entertaining, who do you think the original audience might have been?
- Where do you think these crazy stories were probably told?

Lead student discussion toward the fact that these stories were probably told by loggers to pass the time during long, hard work days.

Take a moment hear to discuss the idea of oral tradition. This is the idea that stories have been handed down for generations, many of them without being written down. Because these stories were told by word of mouth, the details were often exaggerated, and the heroes became a little stronger, a little tougher, and a little more outrageous with every telling.

Teacher's Note

Notation is a skill that will be used throughout the rest of the lesson. Students will be practicing this skill repeatedly in the next three handouts, in addition to learning other valuable literary skills.

Once you feel that the students have a basic understanding of notation, tell them you are going to move on.

Extend

Give students the **Folktales** handout. As you are passing out the sheet, display **slide 11** and ask the students:

- Does anyone know what a folktale is?

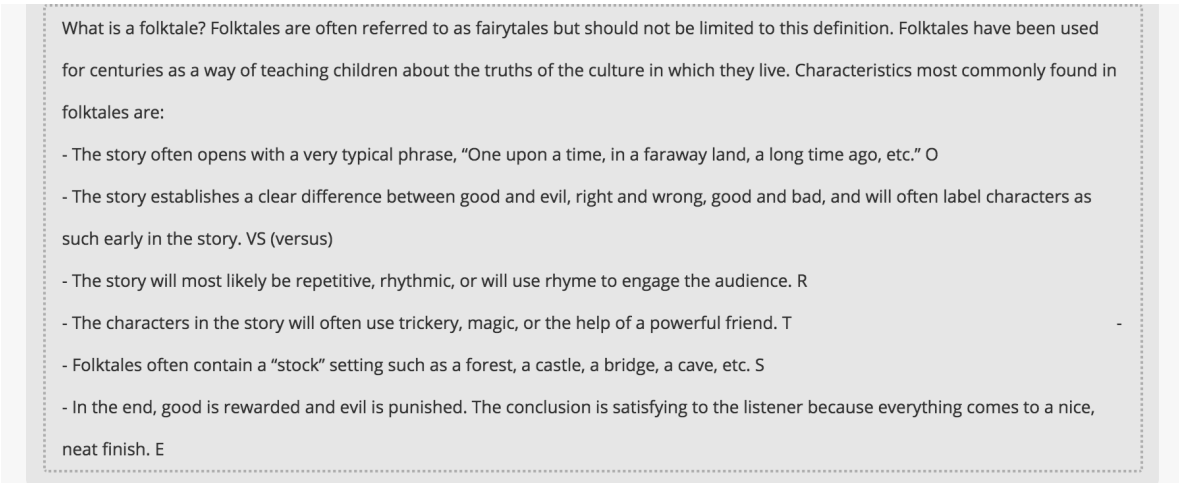
Allow students to offer their ideas. Remember, it is not important to tell students whether they are right or wrong at this point. Encourage everyone to offer their ideas, even if they are unsure.

- What if I told you that folktales and fairy tales are basically the same thing?
- Does anyone remember any fairy tales they learned growing up?

Students may offer suggestions. You can also point out that many popular Disney movies were adapted from classic fairy tales like Cinderella or The Little Mermaid.

Read through the characteristics of a folktale located at the top of the handout. As you read through the characteristics of a folktale, have students assign a symbol or letter to each of the characteristics. For this story, they will be using notation as well.

Suggested symbols have been inserted below and on **slide 12** for the teacher's use, but encourage students to come up with their own as a class.



What is a folktale? Folktales are often referred to as fairytales but should not be limited to this definition. Folktales have been used for centuries as a way of teaching children about the truths of the culture in which they live. Characteristics most commonly found in folktales are:

- The story often opens with a very typical phrase, "One upon a time, in a faraway land, a long time ago, etc." O
- The story establishes a clear difference between good and evil, right and wrong, good and bad, and will often label characters as such early in the story. VS (versus)
- The story will most likely be repetitive, rhythmic, or will use rhyme to engage the audience. R
- The characters in the story will often use trickery, magic, or the help of a powerful friend. T -
- Folktales often contain a "stock" setting such as a forest, a castle, a bridge, a cave, etc. S
- In the end, good is rewarded and evil is punished. The conclusion is satisfying to the listener because everything comes to a nice, neat finish. E

Read through the story together as a class. Have students place symbols in the margins as they discover the characteristics of the story that make it a folktale.

Now display **slide 13** and ask the students the following questions:

- What type of lesson or moral can we learn from this story?

Some possible responses might be that it is important to work together, or that there is strength in numbers. Students might also want to discuss the idea that brains are more powerful than brawn.

- Who do you think the intended audience of this story was originally?
- Why do you think this type of story was created?

Perhaps this story was told to children as a warning to not go wandering off alone. Allow students to answer however they wish. As long as they have valid reasoning, their answers are worthy of discussion.

This story probably originated in Norway, but there are many similarities between this story and other folktales from around the world. Ask students:

- Are there any stories that you can think of that are similar to this story?
- What is it about these stories that make them similar?

Students might comment on stories like The Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, or Goldilocks and the Three Bears. The troll is very similar to the big bad wolf in that he repeatedly tells the billy goats that he is going to eat them, just like the wolf who repeatedly threatens to "Huff and puff and blow their house in!" Also, students might comment on the fact that the number 3 is used in almost all of these stories.

There are countless similarities between stories from other cultures. The students may come up with a wide array of answers. Allow them to explore these similarities without validating whether an answer is better than others.

Once you feel the discussion winding down, tell the students that they are going to now put all of these skills together into one more story.

Evaluate

Give students the **Myths** handout. As you are passing out the sheet, display **slide 14** and ask students:

- Can anyone tell the class what a myth is? Students may have a general idea, but if they do not then ask:
- What if I used the term “Greek Mythology,” does that trigger anyone’s memory?

Most students will have studied Greek Mythology briefly in middle school. Allow them to share their thoughts. Some may even want to share examples of myths that they remember.

Read through the description of a myth at the top of the handout.

Teacher's Note

Before you begin this handout, take some time and practice it for yourself. The story has been provided to you in the "Folk Teacher Resources" attachment.

As you read through the characteristics, make sure that the descriptions are understood by all of the students.

Remind them that the first step in the process is to assign notation symbols to the characteristics of a myth.

Next, read through the myth and have students apply the notation process to the story.

Pause periodically to ask students what they are finding.

Once you come to the end of the myth, display **slide 15** and ask the students:

- What lesson or moral can we learn from this myth?

Some students will respond with answers that have to do with doing what you are told. Some may try to approach the story with humor by saying that this myth is warning men to not trust women. Allow everyone to answer, even if the answer is somewhat humorous. Point out to the students that everyone is entitled to having their own opinion about the story. Once everyone has been given a chance to offer their opinion, ask the students:

- Does this myth remind you of any other stories that you have heard? If students do not immediately respond, you may want to ask a few more leading questions. Ask the students:
- Has anyone ever read, or been told, about a story in which a god creates a human specifically for the purposes of naming animals and tending the gardens of the earth?
- How is this myth similar to a popular religious story that some of us may have learned growing up?

There are numerous similarities between this myth and the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. Both Epimetheus and Adam asked their god for a companion. Both Adam and Epimetheus were placed in charge of naming the animals and tending the earth. Eve and Pandora were both responsible for bringing evil into the world. In both stories, the women were deceived by trickery.

Allow these discussions to run their course. You may have the good fortune of having students from a culture with another very similar story. Every culture has its own beliefs about why there is evil in the world. It may be beneficial to ask the students if they know of any other similar stories.

Conclude this lesson by congratulating students on completing a very long and in-depth reading process.

Explain to them that this process of identifying characteristics, applying notation, inferring meaning, and comparing the story to other stories is a very sophisticated process that they will be able to use with any piece of literature, at any level of education, regardless of genre.

Resources

- *Babe the Blue Ox*. Babe the Blue Ox: From Paul Bunyan at Americanfolklore.net. (n.d.). https://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/babe_the_blue_ox.html
- *The Bat, the Birds, and the Beasts.* Fables of Aesop. (n.d.). https://fablesofaesop.com/the-bat-birds-and-the-beasts.html
- *The Dog and The Shadow*. Fables of Aesop. (n.d.). https://fablesofaesop.com/the-dog-and-the-shadow.html
- K20 Center. The Anatomy of a Story. 5E Lessons. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/388
- *The Lion and The Mouse.* Fables of Aesop. (n.d.). https://fablesofaesop.com/the-lion-and-the-mouse.html
- *Pandora's box, the Greek myth of Pandora and her box*. Greek Myths & Greek Mythology. https://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/pandoras-box-myth/
- *The Three Billy-Goats Gruff*. Short Stories and Classic Literature. (n.d.). https://americanliterature.com/childrens-stories/the-three-billy-goats-gruff