

African Folktales

Objective:

Students will understand the significance of African Folktales

Procedure

1. Students will choose a folktale from those provided by the teacher.
2. Each student will identify character, setting, conflict, resolution, and moral for the story they have chosen.
3. Students will write a paragraph describing the importance of this folktale that slaves brought to the United States.
4. The paragraphs will follow the writing process and the fifteen point rubric developed by the state department.

Evaluation

Paragraphs will be graded.

Additional Resources

1. The Wang Doodle by Jean Cothran
2. Tales of the South Carolina Low Country by Nancy Rhyne



AFRO-American Almanac

FOUR FOLK Tales

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A Poor Man's Pumpkins

There was a poor man and his son who lived alone. One day the man became very ill and knew he was dying.

"When I am buried," he told his son, "plant some pumpkin seeds on my grave." Then he died.

The grieving son did as he was told. The pumpkins grew. After some time one of them was ripe enough to eat. He took it from the vine and carried it home with difficulty, for it was heavy. When he cut the pumpkin, silver coins poured out. The son was astonished and joyful, but was not greedy. He never harvested a pumpkin until it was ripe. Each one proved to be full of silver coins, rewarding him for following the advice of his father. It was not long before the son was rich.

The sultan of the land heard about the son's wealth of silver coins. The greedy ruler sent his soldiers to take all the silver coins. There was nothing the son could do, except to keep the secret of the pumpkins.

As the silver coins were given to the sultan, they turned into snakes. The sultan was both frightened and angry. He decided to get revenge by sending the snakes back to be thrown into the son's house, in the hopes that he would be bitten by them. The snakes were gathered safely into baskets. As the baskets were opened and thrown into the son's house, the snakes became silver coins again.

No one else dared to try and rob the son again. He enjoyed the rest of his days in peace.

The End



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Why Women Do Not Have Beards

Long, long ago, women grew beards. They were not like the beards of men. Women's beards were longer, thicker, and more beautiful than those of men. The women took great care of their beards. Some became so proud of them that they looked down on men, including their own brothers and fathers and husbands. One of the proudest was Nkemdiche. She and her three sisters were the daughters of a man named Enyioma. They were admired for their beauty, but especially for their beards.

Near their home lived a wealthy and good king named Enyi Mba. His favorite treasure was a gold ring. His daughters were also of good heart. One of them saw one day that the servants were very busy, and decided to help them by washing all the plates in the household herself. She picked them all up but did not notice that one of the plates was the plate on which the ring was kept. She took the plates, ring and all, down to a stream to wash them. She never saw the ring slip off the plate into the stream. The rushing waters carried away the ring, and soon a fish swallowed it.

Downstream, a boy was fishing. He caught enough fish that day to sell some and bring the rest home to his family. After he roasted a fish for himself, he cut it open and found the ring. Excited, he took the ring to town the next day and sold it to Nkemdiche.

The king was known and respected far and wide, but the boy did not know that the ring was the king's. Nkemdiche did, but was too proud and selfish to return it to its rightful owner. Instead she hid the ring inside her long, thick beard.

It was not long before the king discovered that his ring was missing. No one, including his daughter, had any idea what had happened. The news of the missing ring was announced throughout the kingdom. The little fisher-boy heard of it and realized whose ring had been in the fish. Knowing that the king would not punish him for his ignorance, he ran to the king's servants and told them how he had found the ring and, not knowing whose it was, had sold it to a town-woman named Nkemdiche.

The king's servants searched everywhere for Nkemdiche, but no one knew where she was. She had hidden herself, hoping to think of a way to keep the ring. Unable to find her, the king's servants suggested that the king offer to marry any woman who could bring back his ring. No one in town had been

told why the servants were searching for Nkemdiche. There was confusion everywhere while the women searched every corner of the town.

Soon Nkemdiche came walking proudly into the king's presence. "I know where the ring is," she announced. "I have it." The king asked for his ring, and she pulled it from its hiding place in her beard. All the servants realized what she had done. The men-servants were shocked, but the women-servants, ever proud of their beards, were amused at how Nkemdiche had fooled the searchers.

The king sent all the women, including Nkemdiche, out of sight and hearing and took counsel with the menservants. They talked of how much contempt the women were showing them because of their beards, and how Nkemdiche had used hers to steal the ring. At first the enraged king wanted to have Nkemdiche put to death, but he was wise enough to wait till he had calmed down. With his anger cooled, he gave another order instead.

"Let the beards of all the women be shaved. Let every bit be scraped from their faces, even the faces of my wife and daughters. For these beards are full of evil. We know of a paste that will cause hair not to grow- let it be put on the jaws of all women, so that no girl or woman will ever again grow a beard to trouble men with." This the king declared with a growl upon his throne, and it was done. Since then, women have not grown beards.

The End



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AFRO-American Almanac

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The Flying Contest

One day, as the birds of a certain place were talking, an argument arose as to who could fly the highest. The smaller birds became quiet, for no one else listened to them anyway. It was the larger birds who boasted and argued. It was decided to hold a flying contest, after a few weeks of training for all the birds who wished to participate.

The smaller birds did not think they had a chance, and did not bother to strengthen their wings. This was except for the wren, who was aware of how small and weak she was. She tried to think of how she could win through trickery, and finally hatched a plan.

On the day of the contest, almost all the birds were saying that the eagle would win. The eagle was a swift, strong bird who spent each day flying higher than most birds did. The wren heard what the others were saying, and decided to stay as close to the eagle as she could. The birds swooped into the air and toward the clouds. It was not long before some of them began to fall behind. The wren managed to keep near the eagle.

Soon the birds soared into a cloud. The wren was so small and light that the eagle never noticed when she softly landed on the eagle's back. As the two passed upwards through the cloud, the other birds saw what had happened and cheered for the wren. The eagle thought that they were cheering for him, and beat his wings more strongly to show off. As he rose higher and higher, he called to the others he was leaving behind, "Who is flying the highest?"

"I am," said a tiny voice from above and behind him.

The eagle was astonished. He flew higher and asked again, "Who is flying the highest?"

"I am," the wren answered again.

The eagle angrily flew higher and higher, calling out the same question and getting the same answer. At last he was too exhausted to fly any more. He began to glide downward to rest. Then the wren let go and flew even higher. The eagle had to admit that the wren had won.

The End



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Why the Bat Flies at Night

So long ago that no one remembers why, the animals and the birds fought a war. The bat could not decide which way to join. As the bat watched, the birds seemed to be winning, so he flew to the side of the birds.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the birds. "You are not a bird."

"See my wings?" asked the bat. The birds accepted him.

Unfortunately for the bat, the birds were being tricked by the animals. The animals won the war. The bat flew to where the animals were.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the animals. "You are not an animal."

"See my teeth?" asked the bat. He opened his mouth and showed his little fangs. The animals chased him away. Maybe some of them had seen him with the birds. The birds saw him coming back from the animals, and would not have him back.

No one accepts the bat now. He still hides from everyone during the day, and only flies about when he can hide in darkness.

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Why the Sun Lives in the Sky

The sea has always lived in the low places such as valleys, but the sun has not always lived in the sky. The sun used to live on top of a mountain. The sun and the sea were good friends. Often the sun would come down from its mountain home to visit the sea, and they always enjoyed their times together. The sun would invite the sea to come visit its home at the mountaintop, but the sea never came.

After a time, the sun became both sad and a little angry. The sun called to the sea, "Why do you not come see me as I see you? True, you are much larger than I, but do you not think I would be a good host? I have enough food for you. I shall make a place big enough for you here on top of the mountain."

The sea replied, "My friend, I am afraid that I would drown you. I am wide and deep. I am your friend, and would rather always serve you than do something that might hurt you."

The sun insisted that the sea come and visit, and at last the sea consented. The sun watched as the sea swelled up around the mountain. Soon the sea was nearly covering the mountain. But the sun was too proud to admit that its home could not hold the sea, so it let the sea keep coming. Soon the sea had covered the sun's mountain and all the other mountains. The proud sun, fearing it would drown, had to leap into the sky where the sea could not come. The sea went back to its home, and the sun stays in the sky rather than go back to the mountaintop.

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The Kind Goat's Reward

A goat was grazing on a grassy plain. As she slowly walked about, she saw a lion in a cage nearby. She started to run away, but the lion motioned for her to come nearer. She saw that the lion was starving and exhausted. The cage was locked.

"Please help me and unlock this cage," begged the lion. "I have been left here and do not know if anyone will return. I have no food or water."

The trembling goat answered, "I am afraid that I shall be your first meal." But the lion kept pleading and promised to leave the goat alone. The goat was kind of heart, and could not bear to leave the lion to die a slow and terrible death. She unlocked the cage and opened the door.

The lion stepped out and thanked the goat. As the goat turned and left, the lion took a few steps and realized that he was weaker than he had thought. Thinking that he might not be able to catch anything else, he ignored his promise and pounced upon the goat.

"This is my reward for my kindness to you? Was I wrong to help you?" asked the goat. Just then a man came walking by and asked what the goat had meant. The lion stepped away from the goat and the goat explained her version of what had happened. The lion then said that he was only doing what he could to stay alive, since he was not sure he would have been able to find any other food.

"I do not understand all of this," said the man. "Is this the cage?" The animals said that it was so. "How were you sitting in this cage?" he asked the lion.

"Like this," the lion lay down and showed him. The man got into the cage and and crouched within it.

"This is the way you were lying in the cage?" he asked.

"No," replied the lion. The man got out and the lion got in, again showing how he had been sitting. The man quickly locked the cage.

"This is the reward of the ungrateful," called out the man as he and the goat left, leaving the lion wondering if anyone else would ever come to help him. The man warned the goat, "What is more dangerous than helping a hungry



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The Frog and the Black-Handed Monkey

Long ago, frogs and black-handed monkeys were friends. The monkeys would take the frogs high into the trees to show them the world from above, and the frogs would help the monkeys get fruit that had dropped into the water.

One day a frog decided to play a trick on one of the black-handed monkeys. He gathered much food and invited the monkey to a feast. His monkey friend was glad to eat with his friend.

"First," said the frog, "let us wash our hands till they are clean." The frog showed the monkey how to wash in the stream. "Your hands are black because they are dirty," said the frog.

The monkey washed and washed, but its hands stayed black. The frog told the monkey to scrape the dirt off with sand. The monkey did not know better, and scraped its hands with sand till they bled. Still the hands were black. The frog could hardly keep from laughing at his cruel trick.

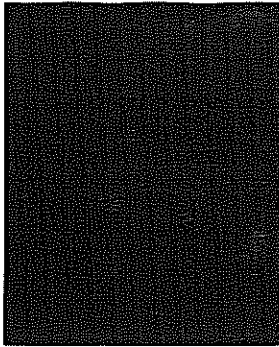
"Your hands are so black! They must be filthy with dirt. Rub them on these sharp rocks. Then they will be clean and white enough for our feast," advised the frog.

The poor monkey tore its skin on the rocks till the pain was too great. The frog told the monkey to go away, since its hands could not be cleaned enough to eat with the frog. Sadly, the monkey left with only its bloody hands and its hunger to show for the day.

When the monkey told the other monkeys what had happened, a wise older monkey explained that all their hands were black because they were supposed to be, and not because of dirt. The monkey was angry at the cruel trick of the frog.

Some time later the monkey invited the frog up into the trees to share some fruit that only grew high above the ground. Gently the frog was picked up and carried high into the branches, since it could not climb trees. The fruit was ready and waiting to be eaten.

"Now," said the monkey. "It is proper to stand up straight while eating." The monkey stood up as it gripped the branch with its feet and its tail. The poor frog tried to stand up straight, but fell off the branch and down to the ground



below. The frog limped home with an empty stomach and a headache.

No longer are frogs and black-handed monkeys friends.

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