

Unit Plan: Power of Language - Language of Power

Created by Joni Allison

The lessons in this unit are designed for Intermediate to Advanced high school students who are learning English as a new language. More scaffolding would be necessary for students with lower English proficiency levels. The lessons could also be used in an 8th grade ESL Language Arts or Social Studies Co-Teaching situation.

Lesson One: The Importance of the Oral Storytelling Tradition

I. Introduction

Stories, whether oral or written, play an integral role in defining and retaining human cultures around the world. The stories and legends of the Cherokee have helped their people retain their culture and their identity as Cherokee through the oral storytelling tradition. In this lesson, students will examine first the power of the oral storytelling tradition of the Cherokee and then draw parallels to the role of language in maintaining diverse cultures around the world. This lesson is the first in a unit that allows students to address the questions below.

Unit Questions:

- _ How does language define us? How can the power of language be used against us?
- _ For English Learners: Why is it important to retain your first language when acquiring English?
- _ For monolingual students: Why is important to be able to switch from your "home" language to your "school" language?

II. Guiding Questions

- _ What role does language play in the identity of a culture?

III. Lesson Objectives

After completing the lesson in this unit, students will be able to:

- _ Explain how language, especially in the tradition of oral storytelling, is directly related to a culture and a group of people.
- _ Explain why people of different cultures use stories.

Language Objectives

- Discuss the similarities of oral storytelling and written stories.
- Read an academic article using nonfiction reading strategies.
- Identify the main ideas in an article in order to take notes.
- Listen to an interview with the purpose of being able to answer comprehension questions.
- Participate in a class discussion by justifying your ideas.

IV. Background Information for Teacher

Languages are dying in our world today and just like biodiversity linguistic diversity is important to our collective knowledge of the human race. As the diversity of cultures and languages of the students in our classroom increase,

teachers have the opportunity to help their students value that diversity that students add to our society. Storytelling plays a role in maintaining not only culture, its values, attitudes, and identity, but storytelling plays a role in maintaining the language of the culture as well.

V. Preparation for Lesson

Review the lesson plan. Locate and bookmark suggested materials and other useful websites. Download and print out documents you will use and duplicate copies as necessary for students.

This lesson plan involves students reading and watching a performance of two Cherokee stories. Teachers should preview the stories and determine what comparison can be drawn between the two stories.

In preparing for the nonfiction reading activity, teachers should read the nonfiction selection from Barbara Duncan using the nonfiction strategy to familiarize themselves with the nonfiction reading strategy. Determine if you will require students to use Cornell Notes or another note-taking strategy to summarize the reading. Based on the number of students in your classroom, you will need to decide how you will divide the article for the Jigsaw reading.

For the NPR listening activity, students need to have a copy of the discussion questions.

Unit Launch:

Brainstorm a list of as many names you can think of in your first language for plants or animals. Take a moment to list anything you know about these plants or animals. For example, is the plant used in cooking, for medicine, for decoration, in preparation for certain holidays?

Watch Patricia Ryan's TED talk: "Don't insist on English!" at http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_ryan_ideas_in_all_languages_not_just_english.html

- As you watch, complete a fill-in-the-blank version of the transcript of the lecture.
- Think about the following guiding questions:
 - Why does Patricia Ryan believe that losing languages is a problem?
 - What are the reasons that Patricia Ryan thinks requiring students to pass the TOEFL is a bad idea?
- Discuss your ideas with a partner in response to the guiding questions above.

VI. Lesson Activities

Activator:

Journal: Think about a story that your parents or grandparents told you. Why did they tell you this story? Was it to entertain you? Was it to teach you a

lesson? Did the events in the story really happen? Do you know somebody else who has heard a similar story?

Learning Activities:

- *Activity 1: How is listening to a storyteller different from reading a story? How are they the same?*
 - Read "How the World Was Made" at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/cher/motc/motc001.htm>
 - Read "The First Fire" an excerpt from Rozema, Vicki. Cherokee Voices: Early Accounts of Cherokee Life in the East. Winston Salem: Blair, 2002 or online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/cher/motc/motc002.htm>
 - Watch a clip from *Appalachia: A History of Mountains and People* of a Cherokee woman telling the Cherokee Creation Story. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRwGYRcNUSI&feature=related>
 - Compare the two stories using a Double Bubble. Discuss in a small group what similarities and differences you noticed in the two stories. Add any new ideas from your group discussion to your Double Bubble.
 - Independent Work: Write a paragraph using your Double Bubble
 - Use a topic sentence.
 - Connect your ideas with comparison and contrast transitional devices.
 - Conclude your paragraph with a sentence stating your evaluation as to which you prefer: the oral story or the written story.
 - Rubric...
 - Periodic Summarizer: Conga Line with Cherokee Music - Share one comparison from today's lesson with a partner. Then move down the line and repeat with a new partner.
- *Activity 2: Why is the oral storytelling tradition so important to the Cherokee people?*
 - Have students do a Jigsaw reading of excerpts from Duncan, Barbara. *Living Stories of the Cherokee*. "Introduction" University of North Carolina, 1998. Pp 9-24. (See attached PDF.)
 - Begin with the section "Stories and Cultural Identity". End with the section "Oral Poetics and Transcription".
 - Divide the reading up equally among small groups. Each group will use the Nonfiction 5-Finger reading strategy for their section. http://prezi.com/tddo4oqgo_3s/five-finger-approach-to-reading-nonfiction/?auth_key=ff5c975788455bc2a95d47b4c76c226d52cf5222
 - As students read and summarize their section of the article, they should take notes of the key points from their section.

- Then student share their summaries, the author’s purpose they determined, and their main idea statements from their section with other groups.
 - Then each group will use their section main idea statements to write one main idea statement for the entire article.
 - Periodic Summarizer: 3-2-1 Summarizer
 - List the **3** most important ideas from the article.
 - List **2** *thoughtful and intelligent* questions you have or would like to ask the author.
 - List the **1** idea you found most interesting in the article.
- *Activity 3: Why is important to keep different languages alive?*
 - Read and discuss the meaning of the following questions.
 - How many languages are there in the world?
 - What is one example K. David Harrison gives for what information is lost when a language dies out?
 - Where does K. David Harrison find a language that was previously unknown to the outside world?
 - Who does Harrison think is most important to revitalizing a language?
 - What is one example of how communities can give prestige to a language?
 - Listen to NPR’s *All Things Considered* segment on K. David Harrison’s new book *The Last Speakers*
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130242203>
 - As students listen to the interview , they take notes to help answer the questions listed above.
 - Students form small groups to share notes from the interview and work together to answer the questions.
 - Periodic Summarizer: Journal - How does this article make you feel about other languages you speak?
- *Activity 4: Independent Work: Apply the nonfiction reading strategies and note-taking strategy to an excerpt from Joshua Fishman’s article “What Do You Lose When You Lose Your Language?”.*
 - <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/SIL/Fishman1.pdf>

VII. Assessment

- Participate in a class discussion on how language, especially in the tradition of oral storytelling, is directly related to a culture and a group of people and why people of different cultures uses stories. Use resources, readings, and notes from above activities to justify your ideas.
- In response to the activities and class discussion, write a personal essay about what role language plays in your life?
- Formative Assessment
 - Conga Line Summarizer
 - 3-2-1 Summarizer
 - Journal Entry

VIII. Extending the Lesson:

- Find a story that is important to your cultural identity. Share the story with the class through one of the following methods:
 - Tell the story.
 - Create a glogster representing the story.
 - Create a comic strip of the story.
 - Create a Flow Map of the story.

- Explain the cultural significance of the story. What cultural values does the story present?

X. Additional Information

- Grade levels: 9-12
- Subject areas: Literature and Language
- Time required: 3-4 days
- Skills: Critical thinking, Discussion, Interpretation, Nonfiction reading strategies, Making inferences and drawing conclusions, Writing in response to reading and discussion, Listening Comprehension
- Standards Alignment: Lesson align with Common Core Language Arts and Literacy for History standards
 - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
 - Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
 - Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

- Author's name and affiliation: Joni Allison ESL Teacher Grades 6-12 Hendersonville, NC