

Literary Genres

Folktales and Folklore



About this video



LITERARY GENRES

Folktales and Folklore

Folklore and folk tales are stories that have been passed down through the generations in cultures all around the world. Let's explore different examples and consider why these types of stories have endured for so long.

Key question:

What are the common elements of folktales and folklore, and why are they still universal to readers around the world?

Key vocabulary:

folklore

folktale

oral tradition

proverbs

riddle

myth

rhythm

morals

theme

Learning intention:

Identify and evaluate common elements throughout the folklore and folktale genre.

Before watching

Activating prior knowledge: Two minute talks

Students will form pairs and brainstorm everything they already know about folktales and folklore. Each student will brainstorm for two minutes. The pair or teacher will choose one student to go first, and then they will switch at the two minute point. A timer can be helpful.

A few groups can share their responses with the class before the video, or pairs can do this activity independently.

Sample brainstorming topics:

- What is the purpose of folktales?
- Are there any folktales from your own culture or upbringing that you'd like to share?
- How are folktales similar to each other? How do they vary?
- What is your favorite folktale? Why?

After watching

Below are class discussion questions and two activities to extend the learning from the video and to check for understanding.

Class discussion questions

1) What artistic forms can folklore and folktales take?

- *Music*
- *Songs*
- *Riddles*
- *Illustrations*
- *Poems*
- *Nursery rhymes*
- *Stories*
- *Ballads*

2) Why do we tell folktales?

- *Share wisdom*
- *Preserve cultural tradition*
- *Recount myths*
- *Share history*
- *Explain natural/religious/spiritual phenomena*
- *Extoll moral lessons*

3) Many folktales were preserved in oral tradition for generations before they were ever written down. Can you think of any folktales that began in the oral tradition that we still know today?

- *Historical sagas such as the Iliad and Odyssey, Beowulf, Gilgamesh.*
- *Urban legends like Big Foot, Bloody Mary, Slender man.*

4) What are the key elements of this genre?

- *Rhythm and repetition*
- *Characters and archetypes representing good and evil*
- *Moral lessons and cautionary tales*
- *The triumph of good over evil*

5) What themes do stories such The Origin of Fire, The Rabbit in the Moon, Anansi the Spider, Cinderella, and Rapunzel share?

- *Cautionary themes about greed/jealousy/grudges/ambition*
- *Forgiveness/friendship/change/kindness*
- *The triumph of good over evil*
- *Creation stories*
- *Bravery*

Activity 1: Modern adaptations

Students are to think of ways they've seen folklore and fairytales in modern art forms, such as novels, TV shows, and movies. E.g. *Cinderella*, *Merlin*, *Once Upon a Time*, *Percy Jackson*, *Kamigami No Asobi*, *Lore Olympus*.

Which adaptation appeals to you the most? How were these stories adapted to feel relevant to today's world?

Students are to pitch a movie, book, or TV show idea that adapts and retells a folktale for modern audiences. These responses can be written independently and turned in at the end of class, or students can pitch their ideas to the class or in groups. Students should consider:

- Who is their target audience?
- Why will this particular folktale resonate with people today?
- How or why would you alter the story (changing time periods, adding technology, modifying characters, etc.)?
- Is there a modern, moral lesson you'd want to incorporate?
- What medium would you use? (Film, animation, comic, story, etc).

Support:



This activity can easily be adapted for small groups or pairs of students instead. Students can work with a partner or their group to create a pitch. The teacher can provide examples of modern adaptations for inspiration, or assign a specific medium or folktale to modernize.

Extension:



Students can write a character list/Dramatis Personae to accompany their pitch.

Students should consider:

- Will you introduce original characters?
- How would the original characters change or modernize the story?
- Are there characters from the folktale that you would cut out?
- How does your protagonist/antagonist differ from the folktale?

Activity 2: Folklore around the world

Divide students into three or four small groups. Each group will choose a folktale from anywhere in the world, or the teacher can assign folktales from different regions. Students will read their folktale and identify key themes or lessons. The group should prepare to give a short summary of their folktale and the themes they identified.

Global folktale examples:

- Europe: "Brothers Grimm" fairy tales, "Aesop's Fables"
- East Asia: "Li Chi Slays the Serpent", "The Mirror of Matsuyama"
- The Pacific: "A Calabash of Poi"
- Indigenous North America: "Maushop, the Good Giant"
- Latin America: "The Bird Sweet Magic", "The Mountain Lion and the Grasshopper"
- Africa: "The Wolf Queen", "Anansi the Spider"
- South Asia: "1,000 Arabian Nights", "The Lion and the Crane"
- Indigenous Australia (Dreaming story): "The Galah, and Oolah the Lizard"

After each group has finished, ask the class to identify any overarching themes they noticed in each other's presentations. This can be a discussion, or the themes can be compiled on a master list.

Support:



Students can be given a list of themes to look for and identify instead of choosing a theme themselves, such as creation, good defeats evil, magic, a hero or heroine, kindness, generosity, or true love.

Extension:



Ask students to imagine what folktales will be like one thousand years into the future. Students can write down or share their responses in small groups.

- What parts of our modern culture or history could become myths or legends?
- Could there be different, or new, moral lessons?
- How will oral tradition evolve with the introduction of new technologies like the Internet?

Conclusion

Ask students to respond to the essential question posed at the beginning of the lesson. Ask if they still have any questions about the content presented in the video. Discuss and answer these questions as a class.