

Project: Second Language Explanatory (*Pourquoi*) Stories

Pourquoi stories reveal cultural traditions from Australia to Zimbabwe. *Pourquoi* means "why" in French. *Pourquoi* tales are old legends told to explain why certain events happened. These tales often start in the past, e.g. *A long, long time ago . . .* and end when the explanation is complete. *Pourquoi* tales are most often concerned with animals and the natural world.

In learning and retelling traditional *Pourquoi* stories to their **third grade PALS***, (*monthly interaction between the two groups to introduce French to the elementary students) French students in **grades 8-12** will also learn and introduce corresponding vocabulary both in Blackfeet and in French. The same lesson could be incorporated in another second language, Spanish or German for example.

Link to Essential Understandings:

Essential Understanding #3 states,
"The ideology of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

Objectives:

- To understand the concept of explanatory myth in several diverse cultures, ultimately emphasizing a regional tribe.
- To recognize the similarities and explain the contrasts in *pourquoi* themes from different cultures
- To showcase the diversity of Native people.
- To diminish two common stereotypes about Native Americans: that they represent cultures of the past and that they are one cultural group, instead of many nations with unique customs.
- To foster a positive identity of Native people in a world view.
- To encourage the exploration of one's own and other cultures

Procedure:

- Students will listen to some *Pourquoi* stories, specifically from Martiniquais and West African francophone cultures and (especially) Native American cultures. The instructor should preface the stories with information about "human nature wanting to see something familiar in something unfamiliar," and that explanatory stories are attempts to imaginatively explain scientific phenomena that early people had no other way to explain. Early people were immersed in the cycles of nature; the cycle of birth-growth-death- rebirth; the heavenly bodies; the origin of plants and animals, their peculiarities, or how they were changed in some way in the past; and the origin of land

formations, just to name a few. People created explanations that fit with their beliefs about the interrelationship of all things.

- Students will research and choose a favorite explanatory Native American story as well as research the appropriate second language vocabulary that corresponds to the story.
- Students will learn by means of a story board how to tell the story as opposed to reading it. The student will create a story board using appropriate pictographs, as a means of passing the story on.
- After telling the chosen story to their 3rd grade PALS, the 8-12 graders and the 3rd grade PALS will create a pourquoi story of a local Montana nature, involving animals, landscape, and plant life of students' specific area or of the constellations. In choosing a Pourquoi story, the students will also learn of specific symbols used in pictographs.

Research involved:

- Research Native American Pourquoi stories
- Research flora of specific county or area.
- Research wild animals of the region.
- Research constellations and their connection to the Native American people.
- In the plants, animals and constellations areas of research, the students will internalize the vocabulary in French and recognize the Native American vocabulary as well.
- Research the names and the importance of Montana landmarks (for example the Sweetgrass Hills, Chief Mountain) to the native people.
- Research making of story boards

Resources:

- Native American Lore
<http://www.ilhawaii.net/%7Estony/loreindx.html>
- Legends of the Blackfeet and of the Kiowa
<http://www.ocbtracker.com/ladypixel/legend.html>
- *Ananse the Spider: Tales from an Ashanti Village* by Peggy Appiah
- *The Magic Orange Tree and other Haitian Folktales* by Diane Wolkstein
- *Gumbo Ya-Ya: Folk Tales of Louisiana* compiled by Saxon, Dreyer and Tallant
- *The Power of Story: Teaching through Storytelling* by Rives Collins and Pamela J. Cooper
- *Creative Storytelling: Choosing, Inventing, and Sharing Tales for Children* by Jack Maguire
- *Names on the Face of Montana* by Roberta Carkeek Cheney
- Field trip to view and identify indigenous area plants (for example, in Eagle Falls near Two Medicine Lake in Glacier National Park there are over 200 plants that are identified in English and Blackfeet.)
- *Montana Native Plants and Early Peoples* by Jeff Hart

- Outside viewing of constellations in the evening sky with a person knowledgeable in constellations and traditional Native American beliefs.