

Building Literacy in the Elementary Classroom through the Pedagogical Strategy of Storytelling

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Introduction

“Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you will help them become what they are capable of becoming.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

This curriculum unit will give educators an opportunity to use storytelling as a strategy to build literacy and spark engagement in the classroom. As student expectations shift and are held to higher standards we as educators also have to have a shift in the way we deliver our instruction to our 21st century learners. My inspiration for this unit came after understanding the achievement gap many of our inner city students are facing in reading and the passion to try and narrow that achievement gap through accelerated learning and collaboration. Bancroft Elementary School is an urban neighborhood school located in Wilmington, Delaware. Bancroft is located in the Christina School District which is the largest school district in Delaware and services over 17,000 students. The current enrollment is just over 400 students and we service students in Pre-K through 5th grade and also house one of the districts Montessori Programs for K-5 grade. In addition, Bancroft has a DAP program, specialized settings, as well as a REACH program servicing students with disabilities. I teach 4th grade and teach all core subjects (*ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies*). I am in my 4th year of teaching at Bancroft. I am currently working on narrowing the achievement gap for my students in math and reading. The achievement gap many of our inner city youth our up against is rather significant. Due to this gap, Bancroft was recognized as a Partnership Zone school and now recently a Priority school due to the achievement gap. My students are considered some of the most disadvantaged students in the state who are living in a high crime area.

This unit is designed for 4th grade students but could be easily adapted for 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grade. This unit could also be used across the core subjects and was developed to help increase rigor in the classroom and find ways educators could bring innovation, engagement, and creativity into the classroom.

Rationale

This is my first year participating in the Delaware Teacher Institute. I wanted to participate in the institute because I wanted to research more strategies to use with my scholars to help with literacy and writing development. I wanted to collaborate and learn from other educators and work with our seminar professor through our institute at the University of Delaware. “The most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration our growth is limited to our own perspectives,” stated Robert John Meehan. One of the unique and invaluable components of the Delaware Teacher Institute is the collaboration with other participants and the sharing of best practices. I also want to create a unit which educators can easily use and adjust to fit the needs of their curriculum requirements. This will be my first unit I have developed. I decided to choose the seminar **Stories in Performance: Drama, Fable, Myth, Legend and the Oral Tradition** because I wanted to incorporate movement and performance into my instruction and give scholars a creative way to learn about story details and events using alternate texts. I have researched the benefits of storytelling in the classroom and how it can spark engagement and really help with literacy development. I am excited to learn in seminar about the exercises and strategies I can use to incorporate storytelling and performance in the classroom to use with my diverse population. According to Miller and Pennycuff, “storytelling is an effective pedagogical strategy that can be woven into instruction to increase students’ competencies in all areas.”(Miller & Pennycuff, 2008) Through the use of storytelling and performance, specifically focusing on the Native American culture, I want to help increase achievement in literacy and writing. My goal is to use storytelling and performance to help some of my reluctant readers and build engagement. Engagement also helps to build rigor in the classroom. I would like to also gain a further understanding on how to build this social interaction between my scholars through storytelling and performance and community building. In my unit, I want my scholars to focus on how they can use specific details in a story to explain the character and events of the story in depth as they identify how the character(s) change throughout a story and how they may have a new vision by the end. They will be able to better comprehend a story when they understand the character and events of the story in depth.

With the knowledge of our DTI instructor, our assigned readings, my participation, collaboration with other participants, and my research I hope to strengthen my knowledge of the social interaction that storytelling and performance brings to the classroom and its impact it has on literacy and writing development. “In order for schools to improve the literacy learning of all students, different pedagogical strategies need to be employed.

Using storytelling in the classroom is one way to address literacy development by improving oral language, reading comprehension, and writing,” stated Miller and Pennycuff. There is also a strong connection between reading and writing and to build stronger writers but we have to give them an opportunity to collaborate and discuss with each other what they are reading and writing. When students are able to collaborate and have rich conversations it is easier for them to write about it. Without those conversations, they can struggle to have a purpose for writing. You can help scholars in the classroom build confidence in their writing if they are able to have discussions about what they are going to write about first. Storytelling and building these social connections will give students an opportunity to collaborate and broaden their understanding of communities inside and outside of the classroom. In one of our Seminar readings, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, I read about how individuals in the face of struggles end up having more vision. Through research, I want to learn more about the heroic self and how through the face of struggles characters change and develop a new vision. I want my scholars to learn about some of these journeys and heroes through studying Native American legends and how their struggles may have led to a bigger vision for their community.

My proposed idea would be to create a unit around the novel, *The Sign of the Beaver*, and other Native American readings, which will focus on the strategy of storytelling. Through this novel study, I want to introduce the Native American culture to my scholars, specifically focusing on the legends from Delaware and their community. Students will analyze the details in the story and the characters to build their understanding of the Native American culture. I want to introduce them to the local Native American culture in Delaware. There are many Lenape legends stories to be told but in this unit we will focus on 3 legends. Storytelling was an integral part of the Lenape tribe. We will take a look at the Native American Legend *The Rainbow Crow* from the Lenape tribe from Delaware as well as a Native American Cinderella story called *The Rough Faced Girl*. Scholars will need to be able to compare and contrast complex texts and the texts will be paired up with other texts to help scholars compare and contrast texts across cultures.

Through storytelling, my scholars will be able to interact socially and build a stronger community in the classroom. These social interactions that will result from storytelling will help them create a strong classroom community. We will learn about the Native American culture and their traditions and how they can make connections to their own community. I plan to use the research I do to help me build this unit. My vision is to increase literacy in the classroom by using the strategy of storytelling and performance.

According to the author John E. Lewis, Native American Myths & Legends, Native Americans used storytelling as a form of communication. Prior to 1820 many of these oral readings of stories were not written down which grew concern for fear many of their stories would be lost forever. Many myths, legends, and tales were not written down because writing was obsolete since in the Native American culture these stories were shared orally. Because of this, about a third of the myths and legends were lost. These myths were not recorded until the 1820's. The culmination of scholars ensuring these stories did not vanish forever happened during the period of 1887-1934 as they rushed to record. "Myth is not dead. For Native Americans it is a source of identity, a mechanism for cultural and political renewal," stated John E. Lewis. My scholars will also learn about the tribes by region, beginning with the local tribes in Delaware. Learning this information, will also help them to see how tribes had their own communities.

My scholars have an idea of the concept of community because most of them live within blocks of our school and they are familiar with their own community. Professor Leslie Reidel encouraged us to learn about the community our scholars live in and legends along with the stories they may have from their community they can share in the classroom. I thought by studying the Native American culture, I would be able to help my students learn about how a community is built, how individuals work within the community, how communities experience struggles, and how these struggles may lead to a new vision.

Content

I wanted to inspire my scholars and give them a different avenue to access literature. The art of storytelling will give me an opportunity to reach some of my reluctant readers and engage them through storytelling and performance. I decided to take this seminar **Stories in Performance: Drama, Fable, Myth, Legend and the Oral Tradition** with Professor Reidel to create a curriculum unit which gave scholars access to literature in a more engaging way. Throughout our seminar, we learned many techniques for bringing storytelling into the classroom and how we can build a classroom community through this process. We discussed the elements of dramatic structure and how once you know the elements you can apply them to almost any story. Storytelling can be used as a pedagogical strategy to help with literacy development and build stronger writers in my classroom. In many schools across the United States, there is an achievement gap among our most disadvantaged students. I am determined to find innovative ways to reach my scholars and help narrow the achievement gap they are facing. I wanted to share this

strategy with other educators who may also have a reading gap to narrow and who may be looking for more innovative ways to deliver instruction. Using a strategy such as storytelling will give me an opportunity to reach my scholars in a non-traditional way.

According to Miller and Pennycuff, “Because of the interrelated nature of the processes involved in reading and writing, storytelling is an effective pedagogical strategy that can be woven into instruction to increase students’ competencies in all areas.” In 4th grade alone, 41% of 4th grade boys and 35% of 4th grade girls are reading below grade level. These figures jump to 70% for disadvantaged students in the inner city.¹

In seminar, we studied the Freytag 19th century model for dramatic structure. In Freytag’s model, the high point will occur in the middle of a story. However, our seminar leader encouraged us to look at a different structure that looks at the unfolding of a conflict. In order for my scholars to have an understanding of drama it’s important for them to be able to identify the structure of a drama. We learned about dramatic structure and how the conflict unfolds. Standards today have students diving deep into a piece of text and using text evidence to support their responses and using that evidence to determine the author’s message and central theme. In many pieces of alternate texts (*poetry, myths, fables, fairytales*) you will find an individual come back after a journey transformed with new possibility, a new vision, or a sense of hope. It’s important for scholars to understand dramatic structure and the elements of a story in order to uncover the transformation of a character. Dr. Debora B. Schwartz stated, “Analyzing the **plot structure** can help you to understand the action as purposeful, connected, and oriented to a logical end rather than seeing it as a haphazard accumulation of seemingly random episodes.”² Below is a breakdown of dramatic structure as defined by Dr. Debora Schwartz and our seminar leader Professor Leslie Reidel. I want my scholars to be able to identify each stage of dramatic structure. They will first practice this skill with a novel study along with a variety of mentor texts.

Contemporary Dramatic Structure/Plot Components

1. **Introduction (Protasis):** *The conflict is introduced in the introduction. Authors sometimes introduce the conflict at the beginning of a story to set up the plot. This is also known as the “inciting force.” By setting up the plot, the reader will be able to see that there is a problem that will be resolved later in the story.*³ In seminar, Professor Reidel gave us the example of a boxing match and to think of

the intro to the match. It's exciting! The introduction draws the audience in and can be rather exciting. It's the hook to draw the audience in where our characters are introduced.

2. Rising Action (Epitasis): *In this stage, characters will begin making decisions. These decisions characters make may complicate the action. In this part of the story the characters may reveal some options for resolving the conflict.*⁴ In seminar, we learned the rising action takes up most of the play where complications as well as surprises continue to occur. We learned that if there is not an action that is rising, then the story or play can become boring.
3. Turning Point (Climax/Climax): *The characters begin to change.*⁵ *In this part of the story, the central message or theme may be uncovered. This is the boiling point and the rising action has reached its maximum also known as the "critical temperature."* This is the moment the audience has been waiting for. There is emotion and lyrical structure.⁶
4. Falling Action (Catastasis): *The conflict begins to be resolved after a series of actions from the character.*⁷ This can also be the tragic force.⁸
5. Resolution/Conclusion: *The conflict is resolved and there is "restoration of moral and social order." The evil characters are no longer in power.*⁹ The journey or the struggle has been fulfilled and order has been restored. In the resolution, one can go home.

As stated in our discussions by our seminar leader, near the end of the dramatic journey the crisis, climax, and resolution occur very close in order in a "tight package." For example, in a play with the length of 100 minutes the introduction would be 10-15 minutes, the rising action would be around 70 minutes, and the crisis, climax, and the resolution would occur in the final minutes of the play. I think it's important for my scholars to understand this as they work to identify the structure of a story.

Another strategy we learned to use with performance was to teach students about the different energy centers. Deslarte, a French singing teacher and scientist, defined these energy centers as the three primary energy centers. During performance, you can change from one energy center to another. The **Cognitive Center** is located in the head, fingers, elbows, noes, and toes and it's the mental energy which is stored in these parts. The **Emotional Center** is located in the heart, palms, soft tissue in the arms and legs as well as the bottom of the feet. This energy center would be considered the "heart and soul" according to Professor Reidel. Finally, the **Vital Center** is a type of survival energy which is stored in the pelvis, vital organs, back of hand, outer tissue of arms and outside

of legs. This is a great exercise for students to help them become more comfortable with performance. Different characters will use different energy centers. We discussed many characters and what energy center was being used. For example, in Little Red Riding Hood, the big bad wolf would be utilizing the Vital Center where Little Red Riding Hood would be utilizing her Emotional Center.

Native American History and Storytelling

In our novel study to introduce this curriculum unit, scholars will learn about the Native American culture. Through the study of the Native American culture, scholars will have an opportunity to look at a culture that is rooted in storytelling, performance, and legends. This will be a great introduction to get them excited about storytelling. We will work on building a community in our own classroom just as the Native Americans did in their own culture and in individual tribes. Today, there are over 4.5 million Native Americans in the United States today. This makes up over 1.5 percent of our population according to the U.S. Census Bureau. There are many reservations in the United States still today. In the Navajo culture, storytelling helps construct concepts which are then passed from one generation to the next generation. These stories are used to help children learn important messages about life. In the Navajo culture, the Navajo storyteller is considered to be a wealthy person because the storyteller knows legends, folktales, and ceremonies.

Storytellers in the Native American culture are considered invaluable resources in their culture. According to Miller and Pennycuff, storytelling in the classroom can build a classroom community and a school because storytelling inspires students to reflect and identify some of the commonalties they have between each other. Scholars can also learn about the social aspects of storytelling. By participating in storytelling, my scholars will be able to set patterns of meaning and really dive into a text.

According to the author John E. Lewis, Native American Myths & Legends, Native Americans did not use writing and because there was limited writing in their culture, many stories were not documented. Many myths, legends, and tales were not written down. They were only told orally. Because of this, about a third of the myths and legends were lost. These myths were not recorded until the 1820's. The culmination of scholars ensuring these stories did not vanish forever happened during the period of 1887-1934 as they rushed to record. We can use this avenue to teach our own students how important their writings are and how important the stories of their own community are to documenting the history of where they came from.

As scholars read a piece of text, they will also work to identify the signposts the characters experience. Authors Kylene Beers and Robert Probst came up with a list of signposts scholars should be on the lookout for while they take their journey through a story. This will help them dive deeper into the text and really connect with the characters they study and develop that deeper understanding which will help them make connections, draw conclusions, and make inferences. Identifying these signposts will allow them my scholars, as they are reading and performing, to stop at these signposts and make connections. These signposts are also known as the Notice and Note signposts. During a journey through a story, while identifying the elements of dramatic structure, my scholars will look for the following signposts:

Memory Moments

Tough Questions

Contrasts and Contradictions

Words of the Wiser

AHA Moments

Again and Again

When my scholars identify the sign post Contrasts and Contradictions, they notice a character does something that contrasts with what they would expect or contradicts the earlier acts or statements of the character. My scholars will have to ask themselves why the character is doing that. When my scholars identify an Aha! Moment, they identify the character finally figured something out or finally realized something in the story. My scholars will then ask themselves how this Aha! Moment may change things for the character. In studying Jason Campbell, we learned about the journey of a character. Characters change throughout a story and as we continue reading they grow and change by the end of the story. When scholars identify the sign post Tough Questions they notice the character asking a very difficult question. In the novel study outlined in this unit, we will notice the character has a tough decision near the end of the story. The main character in The Sign of the Beaver will have to decide if he stays and waits for his family or begins a new life with an Indian tribe. When characters face these tough questions, my scholars will need to ask themselves and determine if they have any questions that they wonder about themselves. The sign post Words of the Wiser is when scholars have identified a character in the story, which is typically older than the main

character, takes the protagonist aside and offers advice, serious advice. The young boy the main character befriends has a grandfather who becomes the voice and gives our main character wise words. My scholars will then need to ask themselves what the life lesson is and how this might affect the character. The Again and Again signpost is a phrase or situation that is mentioned over and over again. My scholars at this point of the text will ask themselves why an event continues to happen or why a phrase or saying is repeated. They need to look at why the words are being repeated over and over again and what message the author is trying to make. In the last signpost, Memory Moment, scholars will ask themselves why this particular moment is important to the character. Characters will suddenly remember something when my readers identify this signpost. In a Memory Moment, the author interrupts the action to give us a memory the character had. These signposts along with the elements of dramatic structure will allow my scholars to dive deeper into the story and better understand what the author is trying to tell my readers. I will have my scholars work on identifying the signposts throughout this unit as well as identify the elements of dramatic structure and how they can overlap with each other.

Native American Tale- Delaware Lenape Indians

The Rainbow Crow: In this Native American Legend, a beautiful crow loses its beautiful singing voice and lost its beautiful colors. The central message of this story is about helping others and friendship.

Overarching Understandings and Questions to Keep in Mind for the Development of the Unit

Enduring Understandings

This unit will address the need currently to build literacy and writing achievement in the classroom: *Describe how the art of storytelling and performance can help build literacy and writing achievement in the classroom through the study of Native American legends.*

Objectives

Scholars will be able to:

- *define legends through the use of alternate texts*
- *use complex texts to study characters and events*
- *describe in depth a character, setting, and event in depth*

- *use storytelling and performance to learn how to collaborate through social learning in the classroom and understand how communities work and communicate*
- *make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation of the text*

Additionally, this Curriculum Unit will focus on the below Common Core Standards:

- **Key Ideas and Details/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3** *Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).*
- **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.7** *Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.*

Essential Questions

1. How do authors use different clues about the character (*thoughts, actions, words*) and how characters influence one another to better understand a story?
2. How can understanding characters and events in depth help the reader better comprehend a story?
3. How can you make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation on the text?
4. How can a character's struggle lead to a new vision?

Analyzing the **plot structure** can help you to understand the action as purposeful, connected, and oriented to a logical end rather than seeing it as a haphazard accumulation of seemingly random episodes.

Instructional Strategies

I will need to incorporate a variety of strategies to reach all learners. It's critical to also incorporate technology into the classroom. The strategies I use will serve as an

opportunity for formative assessment and a check for understanding among my students. These strategies also work for our 21st century learners.

Graphic Organizers

Scholars will use a variety of graphic organizers to help them organize their thoughts throughout the unit. There is a great site for educators to pull up a graphic organizer on a Smart Board and used it in an interactive way with students. There is a connection between writing and reading. Scholars will work on improving their writing throughout this unit as we study storytelling and performance. The interactive organizers are also great for my struggling learners. Being able to model how to use the graphic organizer through this interactive site is beneficial to helping my struggling writers or scholars who may have processing delays. To access some interactive graphic organizers visit the following site: <http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/intgos/html/igo.htm>

Responding to Text Based Questions through Technology

Technology plays an integral role in the 21st century classroom. Scholars will be able to answer their text based questions via the [www.socrative](http://www.socrative.com) website. This site allows me to set up formative assessments for my scholars. Individual scholars can go on this site and respond to text based related questions. Scholars can also log in from home and complete assignments via this site. As the educator, you can create a free classroom account. You will be assigned a room number which you will need to provide to your scholars. Scholars can log in and answer the text based question that helps students with higher level thinking. This site is interactive and has a live feed for the entire class to see. As students enter in their responses, they will populate onto the smart board for the entire class to watch as their peers' responses populate. You can set up your classroom quizzes and assessments with scholars entering names or without names if you do not want the class to know who made which response. I also give each of my scholars a laptop and we work on responding to text based questions and also take classroom assessments via this program. It's a fun and interactive way for formative assessment.

Collaborative Learning Groups

Scholars will learn many strategies while working in collaborative learning groups. They will use the talk and share strategy during discussions to turn to their partners and have rich conversations. We cannot expect our scholars to become stronger writers if we do not allow them to have discussions about what they are reading and writing. Collaborative learning groups will give all scholars another opportunity to strengthen our classroom community by their social interactions. Scholars will use post it notes in many of their collaborative learning groups to record information. The collaborative learning

groups are interactive and scholars in the classroom will also have opportunities to work on their close reading strategies.

Reflective Journal

Scholars will also have an interactive notebook they will use as they learn strategies for reading and for storytelling and performance. In the classroom activities, the reflective journal will be used throughout the curriculum unit. These journals serve as an archive for their work and a chance for me as the teacher to use formative assessment and check for understanding.

Sample Journal Questions:

The link below provides a model for scholars to use in their reflective journals. The instructions are explicit and help guide students with their writing and how they can reflect on their collaboration with their peers.

The following areas should be addressed in their writing:

- ✓ What I did
- ✓ What I enjoyed
- ✓ What I found difficult
- ✓ What really worked
- ✓ Next time
- ✓ What I learned
- ✓ Questions I still have

Link to Reflective Journal Questions:

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson401/ReadersReflection.pdf

Sample Writing Rubrics:

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson419/Rubric.pdf

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson407/rubric-writing.pdf

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/Essay%20Rubric.pdf>

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson925/paragraph-rubric.pdf

<http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/resources/>

Visual Retellings

Visual retellings will help scholars use drawings to discuss a piece of text. Scholars should base their drawings on story elements. They should share out their drawings. Research shows when scholars have opportunities to work collaboratively and talk about what they are going to write about they become stronger writers. Story elements would include the following: *characters, setting, key event, problem, and resolution*

Personalized Learning Techniques

I will also use a variety of personalized learning strategies to narrow the achievement gap and where my scholars become the center of the learning environment. Instruction is tailored and gives them an opportunity to take ownership over their work.

The Rodel Foundation of Delaware in conjunction with the Rodel Teacher Council developed a blueprint for personalized learning which can be found in the below link.
<http://www.rodelfoundationde.org/blueprint/what-is-personalized-learning/>

Keep It-Junk It-Cloud It

One of my favorite activities to do in the classroom is the Keep It-Junk It-Cloud It activity. Scholars who are in a routine of doing this activity are truly excited every time we use it in the classroom. Through this activity, scholars work collaboratively to identify key words in the text that connect to the main idea. It is an activity to build leadership skills and really help scholars in the classroom become the center of the learning environment. This activity helps scholars in the classroom analyze text. It's a student led activity.

Questions to Consider that are Outlined in the Attached Video Modeling the Activity

How do students demonstrate their understanding of the text?

How do student facilitators help to increase participation and engagement?

What role do you as the teacher play in the discussion?

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/student-run-lesson>

Sketch to Stretch

Scholars will sketch an image that supports their main idea of a story. The sketch can also represent the theme of a story. Scholars will write one sentence that describes their main idea or theme to go with their image. The use of descriptive words is important. An activating strategy you could do with your scholars would be the "Monster Match"

activity located on the Teaching Channel website. Your scholars will also learn how to write descriptive pieces through the “Monster Match” activity.

Scholars will draw a monster and then they will write a descriptive paragraph about their monster. Educators will team up with another classroom and incorporate technology via a video conferencing program. (Skype could also be used.) Scholars will read their descriptive paragraphs to the class. You can easily adjust this part of the activity if you have limited access to technology by breaking the class into two groups and have them come up to present their descriptive writing pieces needed to continue with the activity. The goal would be for scholars on the other end (listening to the descriptive paragraph) to draw the monster the student has described. The class will attempt to draw the monster based on the description. You would want scholars to draw as close to the description as possible. When someone has to draw it based on their description, students will begin to realize if they had a strong enough descriptive paragraph.

This resource will move scholars' learning forward and help them with their ELA standards addressing descriptive writing. The video will help scholars to see the activity modeled and what their expectations and goals of the writing project would be. The video clip shows the students steps from beginning to end. There are also a variety of ways the educator can elicit evidence. Educators can analyze student work and also conduct observations to check for understanding. It's important to ask important questions throughout this activity because those questions will help drive student understanding. Teachers can also act on the evidence by providing timely feedback to their scholars after they conduct the activity. Educators will have the opportunity to use this activity as a way to clarify the intended learning, elicit evidence, interpret evidence, and act on evidence. After scholars complete this activity, students will make connections between their art work and how their descriptions were important for the listener.

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/3rd-grade-descriptive-writing>

Theme Boards

A “*theme board*” is a great way for scholars to identify the theme of their stories. The “*theme board*” gives scholars the opportunity to have a collection of themes and they can continue to add new themes as they are identified. The board will also allow students to compare themes across the stories they are reading.

Common story themes include the following (not limited):

**See the below attached printable resource scholars could keep in a resource binder.*

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/top-teaching/2011/02/helping-students-grasp-themes-literature>

Acceptance	These books have characters who respect & accept others' differences and beliefs.
Courage	These books have brave characters who have the strength to overcome a fear or accept a risk.
Perseverance	These books have characters who never give up even when facing difficult times.
Cooperation	These books have characters who work together to solve a problem or achieve a goal.
Compassion	These books have characters who want to make those who are suffering feel better.
Honesty	These books have characters who find that it is best to always tell the truth.
Kindness	These books have friendly characters who are generous and considerate of others.
Loyalty	These books have characters who trust each other and never turn their backs on their friends.

Vocabulary on the Move

Vocabulary on the Move is a great way to get your scholars up and moving. It's an engaging activity for building vocabulary. This is a great way for scholars to learn the important words needed to better understand the text. They will wear hats on their heads with the vocabulary word on the front as they try and solve the mystery of what their word is by having conversations with their classmates. I typically staple the vocabulary word to a sentence strip and staple the ends to make a hat. Scholars walk around asking questions to their peers to try and gain additional information to help them determine the word they have on their hat.

Resource: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Bzs0s1d6fi0hZThkNzFhMmItOWI5YS00OGRhLWI4NDEtM2IwZDk4MjI1ZDI0/edit?pli=1>

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: *Define Legends, Native American Culture, and Community*

Objectives

- *define legends through the use of alternate texts*
- *use complex texts to study characters and events*
- *describe in depth a character, setting, and event in depth*

Lesson Essential Questions

How do authors use different clues about the character (*thoughts, actions, words*) and how characters influence one another to better understand a story?

How can understanding characters and events in depth help the reader better comprehend a story?

In Lesson 1, scholars will determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details. They will then summarize the text identifying the author's theme. Scholars will conduct a dramatic retelling of the story. It's important they are separated into collaborative groups and given an event that occurred in the story. Dr. Debora B. Schwartz stated, "*Analyzing the **plot structure** can help you to understand the action as purposeful, connected, and oriented to a logical end rather than seeing it as a haphazard accumulation of seemingly random episodes.*" You can also give each group one of the components of dramatic structure. Scholars should have an opportunity to share their visual images and to have rich conversations in collaborative pairs prior to presenting to the entire class. Assign groups to one of the below components of dramatic structure to perform a dramatic retelling:

- *Introduction*
- *Rising Action*
- *Climax/Turning Point*
- *Falling Action*
- *Resolution*

Mentor Texts to Use to Introduce Curriculum Unit:

Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China Author: Louie, Ai, and Ed Young.

The Rough-faced Girl Native American Cinderella Story Author: Martin, Raf

The Rainbow Crow By Nancy Van Laan-

Free Resources: <http://www.wiseowlfactory.com/BookaDay/archives/1112>

Lesson 2: *Using Complex Texts to Study Characters and Events*

Objectives

- *describe in depth a character, setting, and event in depth*
- *use storytelling and performance to learn how to collaborate through social learning in the classroom and understand how communities work and communicate*
- *make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation of the text*

Lesson Essential Questions

How can you make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation on the text?

In Lesson 2, scholars will learn how do perform a re-telling of a story utilizing character props. It would also be great to work with the drama and art teacher if one is available at your school. This is a great way to incorporate literacy across non-core subjects.

Scholars will do a story re-tell using character props. According to Gretchen Owocki, author of The Common Core Lesson Book K-5, “*Retelling with character props allows children to draw on concrete, visual information as they structure and restructure their retellings, and such experiences increase their comprehension.*”

Give scholars a selection of American Indian myths. From those myths, scholars will design their own characters and perform their story, incorporating all components of dramatic structure. Scholars will also complete a 1 page summary of their myth to turn in after their performance.

Lesson 3: *Making Connections and Storytelling/Performance*

Objectives

- *use storytelling and performance to learn how to collaborate through social learning in the classroom and understand how communities work and communicate*
- *make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation of the text*

Lesson Essential Questions

How can you make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation on the text?

How can a character's struggle lead to a new vision?

In Lesson 3, scholars will work to compare and contrast information from two texts on the same topic and write or speak about the subject. Scholars will have to select a 2nd Native American myth to compare and contrast to the self-selected myth they chose in Lesson 2. Scholars will use a graphic organizer, preferably a Venn-Diagram to collect evidence from the text. To practice this activity, scholars can compare and contract the two mentor texts they read in Lesson 1, which included Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China and the The Rough-faced Girl.

To go along with this curriculum unit, scholars should be simultaneously conducting literature circles/classroom novel study for The Sign of the Beaver. Scholars will have an opportunity, through this novel, to learn about the Native American community and culture. They will learn about how the two unlikeliest characters can become great friends and how cultures can differ but you can find similarities and make connections. They learn each culture has their own traditions and believes and just because one may not have the same culture/traditions, we much value and not judge others. In this novel

study, the two main characters Matt and Attean begin to develop a friendship and Matt learns to gain respect from Attean. Attean is Native American. There is a very powerful theme in The Sign of the Beaver. Using this novel, will give educators and opportunity to begin their discussions on the Native American culture and show scholars how storytelling is embedded in the Native American culture. The goal would be to help scholars get the gist of the information along the way and utilize some of the above strategies to spark engagement in the classroom. Playing Vocabulary on the Move is a great way in the beginning to get your scholars up and moving. They will wear hats on their heads with the vocabulary word on the front as they try and solve the mystery of what their word is by having conversations with their classmates. During a journey through a story, while identifying the elements of dramatic structure, my scholars will look for the following signposts: **Memory Moments, Tough Questions, Contrasts and Contradictions, Words of the Wiser, AHA Moments, and Again and Again** Characters change throughout a story and as we read about grow by the end of the story. Scholars will also have an opportunity, through this novel study to learn about dramatic structure. As students are reading, they should be identifying the sign posts and the elements of dramatic structure.

Assessment: I will use a variety of formative assessments in the classroom which are tied to the attributes of formative assessments. These attributes include the following: Clarify Intended Learning, Elicit Evidence, Act on Evidence, and Interpret Evidence.

I will also utilize the Smarter Balanced writing rubrics for student writing pieces.

<http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/resources/>

In addition, I will utilize our CBM (Curriculum Based Measures) we have in place in our district.

Resources

Teacher Resources

Beers, G. Kylene. *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*.

This resource outlines the sign posts readers can look for when conducting a close read which will help readers develop a deeper understanding of the text.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 2d ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972.

This resource provides information on Campbell's idea of individuals finding a new vision in the face of struggles.

"Dramatic Plot Structure." Dramatic Plot Structure. Accessed October 26, 2014.

<http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl339/plot.html>.

In the above link the Dramatic Plot Structure is defined.

"Finding The Message: Grasping Themes in Literature | Scholastic.com." Scholastic Teachers. Accessed December 9, 2014. <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/top-teaching/2011/02/helping-students-grasp-themes-literature>.

Educators can use the above resource to help scholars with identifying themes and creating a theme board as mentioned in the above strategies section.

Miller, Sara, and Lisa Pennycuff. "The Power of Story: Using Storytelling to Improve Literacy Learning." *Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Education* 1 (2008): 36-43.

Great resource for understanding the importance of storytelling and narrowing the achievement gap by building strong readers and writers in the classroom.

Owocki, Gretchen. *The Common Core Lesson Book, K-5: Working with Increasingly Complex Literature, Informational Text, and Foundational Reading Skills*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2012.

This resource includes great strategies for addressing the Standards in instruction and providing scholars with higher level thinking questions. Also included are instructional strategies to use with each Standard.

"Padlet Is the Easiest Way to Create and Collaborate in the World." Padlet. Accessed December 9, 2014. <http://www.padlet.com>.

This is an interactive site for scholars to use when responding to text. Scholars can create a board or educators can create a board for scholars to respond on.

"Teaching Plot Structure through Short Stories - ReadWriteThink." Readwritethink.org. Accessed October 26, 2014. <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/teaching-plot-structure-through-401.html>.

"Terms of Service | SBAC." Terms of Service | SBAC. Accessed December 9, 2014. <https://www.smarterbalancedlibrary.org>.

Educators in the 21 Smarter Balanced Consortium States will have access to this site, if their states purchased it. Educators can search in a bank of 2,000+ resources tied to the Common Core Standards and at least one of the four attributes of formative assessment.

"The Top CODiE Award Winner of 2014." Award-winning Learning Management System for Teachers and School Administrators. Accessed December 9, 2014. <http://www.schoology.com/home.php>.

This is an excellent site to help with personalized learning and for scholars in the 21st Century classroom.

"Visualizing Student Understanding Has Never Been Clearer." Socrative. Accessed December 9, 2014. <http://www.socrative.com>.

Scholars will be able to answer their text based questions via the [www.socrative](http://www.socrative.com) website. This site allows me to set up formative assessments for my scholars.

Individual scholars can go on this site and respond to text based related questions.

Student Resources

- Louie, Ai, and Ed Young. *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China*. New York: Philomel Books, 1982.
Classroom Mentor Text: Students can use this text with *The Rough Faced Girl* to compare and contrast Cinderella stories from different cultures.
- Martin, Rafe. *The Rough-faced Girl*. Pbk. ed. New York :, 1992.
Classroom Mentor Text: Students can use this text with *Yeh-Shen* to compare and contrast Cinderella stories from different cultures.
- Laan, Nancy, and Beatriz Vidal. *Rainbow Crow: A Lenape Tale*. New York: Knopf, 1989.
Classroom Mentor Text
- Speare, Elizabeth George, and Greg Schaffert. *The Sign of the Beaver*. Old Greenwich, CT: Listening Library, 1998.
This is the text used for the Novel Study in this unit and is referred to throughout the curriculum unit. This is a great way to begin the discussions on the Native American culture.

Classroom Resources

- "Monster Match: Using Art to Improve Writing." Teaching Channel. Accessed December 9, 2014. <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/3rd-grade-descriptive-writing>.
Great resources for helping students develop their writings into great descriptive pieces.

¹ Miller, Sara, and Lisa Pennycuff . "The Power of Story: Using Storytelling to Improve Literacy Learning." *Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Education* 1 (2008): 36-43.

² "Dramatic Plot Structure." Dramatic Plot Structure. <http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl339/plot.html> (accessed October 26, 2014)

³ Ibid. (accessed October 26, 2014)

⁴ Ibid.(accessed October 26, 2014)

⁵ Ibid. (accessed October 26, 2014)

⁶ "Dramatic Structure Handout." Gustav Freytag, *Technik des Dramas* (1863) Triangle/Pyramid (accessed January 17th, 2015)

⁷ "Dramatic Plot Structure." Dramatic Plot Structure. <http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl339/plot.html> (accessed October 26, 2014)

⁸ "Dramatic Structure Handout." Gustav Freytag, *Technik des Dramas* (1863) Triangle/Pyramid (accessed January 17th, 2015)

⁹ "Dramatic Plot Structure." Dramatic Plot Structure. <http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl339/plot.html> (accessed October 26, 2014)

Appendix A

This curriculum unit is aligned to the CCSS (Common Core State Standards) and target the specific standards listed below.

- Key Ideas and Details/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3 *Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).*
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.7 *Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.*

Curriculum Unit Title

Learning about the Community Experience: *Building Literacy in the Elementary Classroom through the Pedagogical Strategy of Storytelling*

Author

Delaware Educator: Karen Eller

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

This unit will address the need currently to build literacy and writing achievement in the classroom: *Describe how the art of storytelling and performance can help build literacy and writing achievement in the classroom through the study of Native American legends.*

What Success Will Look Like-Students will be able to:

- *define legends through the use of alternate texts*
- *use complex texts to study characters and events*
- *describe in depth a character, setting, and event in depth*
- *use storytelling and performance to learn how to collaborate through social learning in the classroom and understand how communities work and communicate*
- *make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation of the text*

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

- How do authors use different clues about the character (*thoughts, actions, words*) and how characters influence one another to better understand a story?
- How can understanding characters and events in depth help the reader better comprehend a story?
- How can you make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation on the text?
- How can a character's struggle lead to a new vision?

CONCEPT A

Define Legends, Native American Culture, and Community: Scholars will get to know their characters through their thoughts, actions, and words. They will collaborate and have rich discussions to help understand the main idea of the text and what the text is mostly about. They will be introduced to strategies to help them identify the main idea by creating mind pictures. <https://learnzillion.com/lessonsets/259-reading-literature-a-dog-s-tale-fiction> They will also learn the elements of dramatic structure and work to identify these elements in a variety of mentor texts and through their novel study.

CONCEPT B

Using Complex Texts to Study Characters and Events: Scholars will learn techniques and strategies to help scholars better understand characters. They will focus on the Notice and Note strategies outlined in the curriculum unit and build on what they learned in Concept A. Notice and Note Signposts: *Memory Moments, Tough Questions, Contrasts and Contradictions, Words of the Wiser, AHA Moments. Again and Again.* They will compare and contrasts texts with a focus on how characters change throughout the story and how a character's struggle may lead to a new vision.

CONCEPT C

Making Connections and Storytelling/Performance: Scholars will use the art of storytelling to retell a myth or legend. They will utilize the skills they have learned to help with their performance. They will also work to summarize the text and also summarize the similarities and differences between characters. They will also work to identify the central message or theme of a story.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

How do authors use different clues about the character (*thoughts, actions, words*) and how characters influence one another to better understand a story?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

How can understanding characters and events in depth help the reader better comprehend a story?
How can a character's struggle lead to a new vision?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

How can you make connections between the text of a story and an oral presentation on the text?

VOCABULARY A

Academic Vocabulary: Historical Fiction, Myth, Legend, Oral Tradition, Folktales, Native American, Lenape, Memory Moments, Tough Questions, Contrasts and Contradictions, Words of the Wiser, AHA Moments, Again and Again, Review Key Elements of Dramatic Structure: *Introduction, Rising Action, Turning Point, Falling Action, Resolution*)

VOCABULARY B

Academic Vocabulary: Main Idea, Details, Summarize, Cognitive Center, Emotional Center, Vital Center, Plot Structure

VOCABULARY C

Academic Vocabulary: Compare, Contrast, Central Message, Theme

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

Creating Mind Movies to Better Understand the Text: <https://learnzillion.com/lessonsets/259-reading-literature-a-dog-s-tale-fiction>

Envisioning While Reading through Mental Images and Mind Movies: <https://learnzillion.com/lessonsets/93-reading-informational-texts-ever-wondered-who-invented-pizza>

Personalized Learning Resource: <http://www.rodelfoundationde.org/blueprint/what-is-personalized-learning/>

5th Grade Common Core Standards: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/5/>

4th Grade Common Core Standards: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/4/>

3rd Grade Common Core Standards: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/3/>

2nd Grade Common Core Standards: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/2/>

List of 20 Native American Authors: <http://oedb.org/ilibrarian/20-native-american-authors-you-need-to-read/>