

Find Your “Why”: Pour Quoi Stories and Their Significance

Julie McCann

Introduction

The worst kind of sad is not being able to explain why.
Luna Adriana Ardiansyah

I am fortunate to be a third grade teacher, the best grade if you ask me! I have another new class of students who are hard-working and truly love to learn. My children come from many, *many* diverse backgrounds, but we are able to learn so much from one another. One of the most important units I teach for the future is about diversity. In this unit, I want to expand our investigations into religion and how people think about world origin and the natural phenomena and patterns within it. To be diverse and to cherish being different is important. Our differences make us interesting. We learn so much from being exposed to others who are unlike us in ways. Our students at West Park, coming from about 25 different countries, experience this diversity on a daily basis. However, in this current political climate, I find myself wanting to make connections for my students. In this unit, I want to stress that we all have commonalities, ways in which we are alike at our core. These similarities can be identified throughout many cultures and can form a bond between those who appear to be so diverse. I want to identify common bonds, while celebrating the rich experiences we gain from one another in sharing our differences.

West Park Place Elementary School is a small suburban school in the Christina School District. We have about 400 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. Located in close proximity to the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware. West Park is a diverse school, hosting the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, Delaware Autistic Program, and REACH –Realistic Educational Alternatives for Children with Disabilities. According to the annual report generated by the Christina School District, about a third of our students are English as a Second Language Learners (ESL), representing about 25 different countries. About 45% of our population are free/reduced lunch students. Our demographics are 20% African American, 26% Asian, 46% Caucasian and 4% Hispanic. I am a third grade, self-contained teacher and therefore teach all subjects: math, reading, writing, science, and social studies. A typical school year provides me with 22 students, a third of which are usually active or recently released ESL. This year I anticipate having a large class size due to the reduction in force that Christina implemented last year.

A strength of our students is attendance and a desire to learn. Additionally, West Park is a mile from the University of Delaware, so we have many resources available. At times, we have many college students doing placements, tutoring and student teaching.

Based on the data from the Christina School District annual report, the teachers at West Park are predominately Highly Effective and Highly Qualified and have many years of experience with most of the educators having obtained at least a Masters degree. As a staff, we work in Professional Learning Communities to analyze data and provide appropriate instruction for our students.

The areas of struggle for West Park are no different than any other typical school. The most obvious concern is lack of funding. Additionally, a third of our students and their families are ESL: with many parents not able to speak English at all. As a result, we have low parental involvement. Finally, families are reeling from the current economic situation. Many of our families are of low socio-economic status.

Rationale

My search to understand how we are connected and the ways that we are all alike drives this unit. Our students come from so many various countries and different cultures that honoring those differences is important. Being unique and strong in one's self is a driving theme in my life, my parenting and my teaching. My last unit was on diversity, but I want to explore further the idea of religion and peoples' belief by looking at many cultural stories and how they explain the origins of the world, life and culture. By looking at many cultures, we will discover similarities. In our current political environment, I find myself wanting to demonstrate how alike we are at our core. I want to help the children find connections with one another, to be open and understanding, and to see others as closely related to themselves. I want to build connections so that as adults the students do not want to create blockades when political ideals or rhetoric are espoused.

From my own personal observations, I have noted that many of our West Park students want to fit in and feel a part of the group. The staff does a great job of building school community. I am constantly searching for avenues for our students to see connections to other cultures within the curriculum, building a stronger community.

Through teaching this unit on religions, students will have a greater appreciation for diversity and its many contributions to our lives. In gaining respect for others' beliefs, the students will be more likely to be tolerant and accepting as they grow up.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are addressed in this unit. Exposing the students to this material will help to make students "college and career ready". The new state test (Smarter Balance) will require difficult reading and comprehension skills for young elementary students. In this unit, students will have to read multiple fiction and non-fiction pieces and synthesize the information from multiple sources to answer questions and write. Exposing students to reading material and requiring them to utilize higher order thinking skills will benefit them through their schooling and their life, as well as, making them more successful on the state test.

This unit will be appropriate for any elementary grade but is designed to fit the Christina School District third grade curriculum. The students will participate in three main components of the unit. First, we will learn about stories from around the world which explain life's origins and how phenomena in nature came to be. Secondly, the students will learn about the characteristics of pour quoi stories and how they explain phenomena in the world through a fictional narrative. Finally, the children will create their own pour quoi stories to share with one another.

The unit fits perfectly into my curriculum in almost all subject areas. It addresses the majority of the reading and writing standards and the speaking and listening standards. The unit will cover many of the Common Core Standards essential for student success, but will focus on three main standards from Reading, Writing and Listening/Speaking.

The first standard, *Reading Literature 3.2*, we will recount stories including fables, folktales and myths from diverse cultures: determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text. Our stories will focus on pour quoi tales. The second standard, *Writing 3.3* we will write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details and clear event sequences. We will accomplish this when writing pour quoi tales to explain natural phenomena. Finally, *Speaking and Listening 3.1*, we will engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. This standard will be addressed throughout our unit through collaborative group work and whole class discussions.

Background Information/Content

Finding creations stories that have common bonds will be fairly easy. I will use the book *In the Beginning Creation Stories from Around the World* by Virginia Hamilton and will choose five stories: *Divine Woman the Creator*, *Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Maker and Feathered Serpent Creators*, *Apsu and Tiamat the Creators*, and *Yahweh the Creator*. The first story that will be used is the Native Americans etiological story about the Sky Woman falling through a hole in the sky toward the wide waste of waters below the sky. Two swans see her fall and decide to catch her on their backs. They realize that they will not be able to support her for long, so they call a meeting of the other water animals. Big Turtle tells the other water animals to go down and bring up some land to place on his shell and Sky Woman may live on the land on his back. Little Toad brings up land for the other animals to place on Big Turtle's back. The land begins to grow and grow until there is enough for Sky Woman to step off the swans onto Big Turtle's back. Sky Woman starts to make it her home. The land becomes as large as North America. When Big Turtle grows weary, he shifts his weight causing the earth to shake.¹ *Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea* is another creation story from Hamilton's book with a similar version of the Earth's creation. It is from the Maidu Indians of California. This story tells of a feathered rope coming down from the sky that connects the earth to the sky.

Like this Maidu version of the story, Iroquois Indians believe that creation started with a tree growing in the center of the land. The tree had four roots which stretched in each of the four directions: north, south, east and west.² The tree was uprooted and made a hole in the sky, which allows a wife of the ancient chief to fall through. The animals notice her falling, and then the story takes on the same tale as Big Turtle. The animals that help her vary a bit, but essentially, it is the same tale. The Iroquois people, more important to the shaping of United States history than any other group, were in control of the part of the continent which was the most crucial for trade and travel, the present day New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.³ The Iroquois people lost most of their ancestral land and political power following the Revolutionary War, through unfair treaties and blatantly dishonest deals with the government, so their ideals of peace for all human beings and balance with the natural world are lessons which the Iroquois people saw all of us still need to learn.⁴ Story telling was a skill many learned from a number of people, usually without knowing that they were learning anything.⁵ Through these stories, the Iroquois hope to teach about peace and harmony.

Like the Iroquois, Australian Aborigines hope for balance. They believe that every living thing- person or animal, even every tree and star and stone never really die. They move from one body to another. They are surrounded by the spirits even though one does not see them.⁶

Another story from Hamilton's book, called *Maker and Feathered Serpent Creators*, relays the Quiche Maya people's four stories of creation. To sum it up, in Mayan culture, the face of the land begins hidden with nothing but sea and sky. The Heart-of-the-Earth-and-Sky appears and calls forth the Earth, and there is solid land. Still there are no living beings until Heart-of-the-Earth-and-Sky creates the animals. He makes birds for the sky and fish for the seas and tiny creatures like insects and worms. Heart-of-the-Earth-and-Sky wants the animals to be grateful to him. He is disappointed that they are not showing their appreciation for their creation. He calls the animals together, but they do not know how to speak words of praise to him. So he punishes them by banishing them to their individual places for living, and he tells them they will not rule the Earth. Instead they are to be hunted and become food for the rest of the rulers of the world. Then he creates man and woman. They are wise and strong. They can think and speak their thoughts. They will be rulers of the Earth. Then the first sunrise dawns upon the Earth.⁷

Unlike the Mayan four stories of creation, the Jewish and Christian creation tales take seven days of creation. God creates light on the first day. The waters are separated into Heaven and earth on the second day and the land emerges on the third day. Seasons and months and the passing of time begin on the fourth day through the creation of the Sun and moon and other celestial bodies. Fish and birds are made on the fifth day. The sixth day, He creates land animals and then finally, man and woman in his image. On the seventh day, God rests.⁸ The ancient Hebrews, who settled Palestine, believed the earth was flat and held in place with the sun, moon and stars fastened to a dome on top of the Earth. In the story of the flood, God opened a window in the sky and let water fall to the Earth.⁹ Utilizing Hamilton's story *Yahweh the Creator* we will learn about the Christian

and Jewish etiological stories.

Religion was the very core of Sumerian life.¹⁰ No prudent person made a decision without first consulting the gods of the sun, earth, vegetation, or moon. They were the first to have a written language and schools, the first group to cultivate wheat and build walled cities and two-story houses and to construct majestic temples. They are now thought by some scholars to be the most remarkable people of the ancient world.¹¹ Men from the British Museum who were digging in the ruins of the city of Nineveh, came across a king's palace with thousands of tablets in cuneiform baked in the sun. Scientists were eventually able to decode the language. Some special stories called The Seven Tablets of Creation have been translated by Dr. E. A. Speiser of the University of Pennsylvania.¹² Most of one of the tablets is missing, but he was able to translate the rest. The Sumerians etiological story as follows:

Hamilton's book tells the story of *Apsu and Tiamat the Creators*. In this story, there is originally no heaven and no Earth. Apsu and Tiamat, the First Father and First Mother of all, somehow come to be. Other gods are born, and they have children and grandchildren. Each generation the children become taller and smarter than their parents. The younger gods can do things their parents have never tried. The young gods are noisy and running about. This disturbs Apsu, and he tries to quiet them. Tiamat hates her children's behavior. They go to their counselor, Mummu. Apsu says he wants to kill his children. Tiamat speaks up against Apsu. But the Mummu agrees with Apsu and they begin to make a plan. The news spreads quickly and Ea, the wisest of the grandchildren and the most skilled in magic begins to prepare. He recites a spell and kills Apsu and builds a dwelling on the massive body of Apsu. Kingu, Tiamat's favorite son, tells his mother of Apsu's murder. Tiamat and Kingu rebel against Ea. When Ea hears of this partnership, he goes to Tiamat to calm her. Upon seeing Tiamat, his courage fails; he cannot face her. He enlists the help of Marduk. Again, the plan is to go to calm Tiamat. Marduk is willing to go but wants to be proclaimed as king if he succeeds. Marduk goes forth to battle with Tiamat. Tiamat is killed by an arrow to her heart. Marduk splits her body and raises half to be set in the sky and the other half make the earth.¹³

Every religion has its own gods. They wax and wane according to circumstances. If a province was successful, other provinces adopted their gods. If a province was a failure, gods were discarded.¹⁴ When men learned to write, they laid civilization's foundation. Through the written word, the world emerged from countless centuries of myths and folklore to a measurable age of history.¹⁵ In the beginning, religion was based on super human power.¹⁶ Religious faith provided comfort and guidance that people could not find in any other way.¹⁷ Never have human beings been so strong and self-sufficient that they did not feel the need spiritual aid.¹⁸ Primitive men were preoccupied with the struggle for survival, surrounded by natural disasters: drought, deluge, blizzards, earthquakes and thunderbolts; the gods must have seemed against them.¹⁹ All over the inhabited world, people became nature worshipers. They held nature in reverence and awe, offering gifts and sacrifices.²⁰ The sun, moon, and stars were common to all people, so many tribes worshiped the same gods under different names. Though every religion praised brotherly love and human kindness, hate and intolerance arose. Children of faith

were brought up believing that their religion was the right way and could not be tolerant of others' ideas.²¹ From the Christian Crusades and before, to the present unrest in the Middle East, more wars have been forged and more suffering endured in the name of religion than any other single cause.²² My hope is to work toward changing this narrow mind set and have the children learn tolerance, even acceptance, for other's ideas.

This unit provides an opportunity for students to search the world around them. Looking internally at one's beliefs, but also looking at others and accepting diverse "stories" help define us. In order to make sense of the world, we need to make sense of others' perspectives as they tie into our own.

Objectives

The objectives in my unit are cumulative. First, we will set a foundation, learning important vocabulary and concepts about origins of life stories or etiological tale.

Secondly, the students will learn about the characteristics of pour quoi stories. They usually come from an ancient culture and have objects or animals who talk. These stories explain why something has come to be or why it looks the way it looks. Students must focus on story parts/elements.

Finally, the students will implement what they have learned by creating their own story, play or some other technique to convey their ideas. They will utilize all their vocabulary and information that they have learned over the course of the unit to create and share their stories with the class.

Enduring Understandings

Students will understand that cultures have many different life origin stories with many similarities across cultures. Students will learn that pour quoi stories are fictional narratives which explain why something is. Finally, the students will discover pour quoi stories have a lesson or meaning and have specific characteristics

Essential Questions

In this unit we will strive to answer these questions: What is an etiological tale (origin story)? What are the characteristics of a pour quoi story? What is the formula or the story parts needed to write a pour quoi story?

Classroom Activities-Books

I am going to teach this unit through a variety of stories/books, video clips and activities. Here are some of the books I plan to utilize:

The Lizard and the Sun by Alma Flor Ada

This Mexican story is about the sun going dark and all the animals trying to find the Sun. A Lizard finds a glowing rock. He tells the Emperor who returns to the rock with the Lizard, and they discover the Sun is asleep inside the rock. They try to wake the Sun but to no avail. The Emperor calls dancers and musicians to wake the Sun. The Sun returns to the sky. From that day to this, lizards lie in the sun on the rocks to remember the day that they helped return the Sun to the sky.

Arrow to the Sun by Gerald McDermott

This is a Pueblo Indian Tale about the Lord of the Sun sending a spark of life down to the Earth. This spark, a boy, is mocked by the other children because he does not have a father. The boy goes on a quest to find his father. He has to pass through some trials but is successful. At the end, the boy returns to the Earth to bring the Sun's spirit to the world of men. This story also utilizes Pueblo art and color throughout the book.

Beautiful Blackbird by Ashley Bryan

This story from Zambia is about how birds used to be so colorful. They never had any black on them except for Blackbird. Soon the other birds became jealous of Blackbird. Blackbird tried to tell the others that beauty comes from within, and they should not want to be like Blackbird. Blackbird paints the other birds with bits of black which have stayed to this day.

Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema

This West African Tale is about a mosquito talking to an iguana who upsets him so that the iguana puts sticks in his ears, leading to a string of events where each successive animal thinks something is wrong. Each event causes something else to happen. Finally, Lion calls the animals to a meeting. The animals share their experiences until they get to the iguana. Iguana is not at the meeting since he has not heard the summons. Lion pulls the sticks out of iguana's ears and everything is cleared up with the animals. Mosquito is listening to everything. She has a guilty conscience, and to this day she goes around whining in people's ears.

How Chipmunk Got His Stripes by Joseph Bruchac and James Bruchac

This is a Native American Tale (Iroquois). One day Bear is walking through the forest bragging that he can do anything since he is the biggest, loudest and so on. Little Brown Squirrel asks him if he can do anything, even keep the sun from rising the next day. Bear says he can keep the sun from rising, but Brown Squirrel does not believe him. Animals begin to gather to see what will happen. The next morning, the sun does come up, and all the animals are happy. All except Bear. Brown Squirrel begins to tease Bear. Bear pins Brown Squirrel to the ground and is going to eat him. Brown Squirrel is clever and tricks bear into letting him go so that he may apologize to Bear. When Bear releases his grip some, Brown Squirrel jumps into a tunnel as Bear's big claws scratched Brown Squirrel all the way down his back. In the spring, when he has healed and comes out, he has long white marks down his back. He was no longer Brown Squirrel, now he is Chipmunk.

A Story A Story by Gail E Haley

This is an African tale about how stories came to be on the Earth. The Sky God kept all the stories by his royal stool. Anansi wants to get the stories, so he climbs to the sky. The Sky God tells Anansi that he has to pay a price for the stories. Anansi returns to the earth to find the items the Sky God demanded in payment. One by one, Anansi gets all the items he needs and returns to the Sky God. Anansi shares the stories with the world-including this one.

Why Raccoon Always Washes His Hands After Eating by Joseph Bruchac

Raccoon is hungry. He tricks Crayfish into thinking he is dead by rubbing pitch all over himself and rolling into leaves and debris. Crayfish sees him and proclaims to everyone that Raccoon is dead. The Chief Crayfish asks about Raccoon. Crayfish says that he has killed him. Crayfish embellishes the story of a great battle. All the crayfish want to see raccoon. They go to see Raccoon who is playing dead. They poke and prod him, getting closer and closer until raccoon is able to gobble them all up. After he eats the crayfish, he goes to wash all the pitch and debris off.

How Buzzard Got His Feathers by Joseph Bruchac

This is an Iroquois tale about how birds have no clothing. Buzzard goes to the Creator to ask for clothing because he is embarrassed. The Creator says of course he can have clothing. He can try on as many suits as he likes, but he can try them on only once. Buzzard does not pay attention, and when he gets to the last one, it does not fit correctly. It is too small. The Creator reminds buzzard of the rules, and buzzard needs to keep the

last suit he has tried on.

How Bear Lost His Tail Joseph Bruchac

This Iroquois tale is about a bear whose proudest possession is his great long tail. Fox has grown tired of hearing bear boast about his tail. So fox decides to trick bear into fishing with his tail. The story ends up that bear's tail is frozen in the lake while fishing, and he has to pull it out. His tail snaps off into what we see today.

The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush by Tomie dePaola

This Native American tale explains why there are so many beautiful wild flowers in the meadows of Texas and Wyoming. This story is about a boy who cannot keep up with the other boys his age, so he takes another path. He ends up being an artist and records the tribal stories. He paints and lays the brushes down. In the morning, beautiful flowers are everywhere, which is what we still see today.

Legend of Bluebonnet by Tomie dePaola

This is a Native American (Comanche) tale from Texas about a small girl who makes a sacrifice to the Great Spirits. She gives her most prized possession, her doll. She thrusts her doll into the fire so that the ashes can be lifted up to the gods. The next day, everywhere the ashes fall, the ground is covered with bluebonnet flowers. Every spring, the Great Spirits remember her sacrifice and the hills of Texas are covered with the beautiful flowers.

Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling

This anthology of stories explains many phenomena such as how the camel got his hump, how rhino got his skin, how the leopard got his spots, how the alphabet was made, and many other stories.

Classroom Activities-Videos

At my school, we have an extensive collection of library videos. Using the students' interests as my guide, I will consider showing: Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Reading Rainbow, A Story A Story by Gail E Haley, Children's Stories from Africa by Monterey Home Video, Anansi- Rabbit Ears told by Denzel Washington, Anansi and the Talking Melon retold by Eric A. Kimmel, Anansi Goes Fishing retold by Eric A. Kimmel,

and Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock retold by Eric A. Kimmel.

Classroom Lessons

The first part of the lesson will be for the class to investigate some creation stories from many cultures. We will read some creation stories, etiological tales, and find that many cultures have similar ideas, even though they are from different world locations. We may read Native American, Australian, African, and Asian stories. Teachers can select which cultures make sense for their students. The various stories will demonstrate that people honor their gods in a similar fashion, while meaning to entertain, instruct and empower their people. (Iroquois, 4) These cultures desire their people to live in a good relationship with the world and the beings around us (Iroquois, 4) I will be using Virginia Hamilton's book *In the Beginning Creation Stories from Around the World* to select my creation stories.

Some *how* and *why* stories cross over into mythology which explains the beginning of the world or universe. Myths require careful research to understand the characters and symbols within the stories, so these myths may be too advanced for third grade. Students will study myths later in their school career and so, I wish to skip this larger genre. The how and why stories I want to cover have small lessons about the consequences of being proud or some other more subtle social lesson the children may learn. Sticking with more simple subjects and stories verses the more complex structure of myths seems more appropriate at this time.

For each story, I introduce the story book's cover, identify from where the story comes, and show its location on the world map. When possible, I provide a brief cultural background.

Following reading the story, we discuss how culture has influenced the story. I ask if there is a moral to the story, or something that the character has learned. Then I ask, why would this experience be important to the people of this culture? Then using a Venn diagram or some other chart as a visual, we will compare the two stories. Comparing each subsequent story to the last continues all the way through the etiological stories, so that the children can identify the similarities across cultures and religions.

I will introduce the term *pour quoi*, a French word for "why", which explains why certain phenomena exists in the world. *Pour quoi* stories are usually folk tales that have been told out loud over many generations, telling about something that happened long ago and explaining why we see the world the way it is today.

Pour quoi stories explain why something exists, usually a natural occurrence. The main character can be an animal or a person, but they talk with specific "storytelling"

voice. The story touches on the culture and why the people believe the story. Usually short, these stories come from ancient culture. Many times, a moral to the story demonstrates character traits, good and bad. These elements are taught and discussed. The teacher posts these pour quoi elements up in the classroom for all to see.

We also discuss the idea of culture, the beliefs, customs, art, literature, and skills of a specific group of people that are passed from one generation to another. When oral literature is not passed down, these stories are lost forever. Listening to stories, sharing them and writing them down for future generations is important to keep our diverse cultures and beliefs alive.

After reading several pour quoi stories, we break down the story into the individual components of a pour quoi story, by working these details out as a group and posting them on the board. Then the students think about their own version of a pour quoi story and fill out the "Write Your Own Pour Quoi Story Worksheet". This will be their pre-writing activity to help them organize their ideas.

Pour quoi stories have a basic formula usually beginning with a phrase "long ago". These stories all seem to have a specific structure. First, the students must select a *narrator*, the one who will be telling the story. Other characters should be utilized. They must select a *main character* or two and then some *supporting characters*. The teacher will define all these vocabulary words for the student.

Students will introduce the natural occurrence the way it looked originally. They will choose the story's setting, stressing the story's time frame. Students will pick characters, animals that would live in that habitat, giving human traits that make them unique. Animals will not be given names, as such individualism distracts from the story. The problem needs to be identified. What will students explain in their pour quoi story? What phenomena or natural happenings are they going to explain? The students have to identify some phenomena in the natural world that they can invent a reason for its existence. Sometimes, they will want to include a moral or a lesson that the characters might learn through the course of the story's unfolding. The students will also want to pay close attention to the cultural influences that may surround their characters. A sequence of events will move the story from scene to scene until the conflict is resolved and the lesson is learned. The ending should include language such as, "that is why we (fill in the blank) today". Good writers should include figurative language and dialogue whenever possible.

The students will develop characters and settings for their stories. The children will select a natural event that they will utilize in their pour quoi story. Students will reveal a problem in their story that they will resolve through events, revealing a key twist in the narrative. Finally, arriving at end and a moral to their story.

Following their writing, I will grade their pieces with a three point rubric. The

children will be provided with the rubric prior to the start of their writing. For a 3, the students need to have an original idea. The story must have a beginning, middle and end. The story must explain how or why something is. For a 2, the students may have borrowed an idea. Their explanation of how or why might not be clear. For a 1, their idea was taken from someone else, and the story has no clear explanation. The children working in groups will also be scored on a reflection sheet about the success of their group's working. The students will score themselves on questions about their cooperation and input of all the members.

The third part of the classroom lessons will be for the students to create and perform, presenting the stories to the first graders. The students may work alone, in pairs or in small groups to write and present their own pour quoi stories. The stories may be presented by acting them out or as an illustrated narrative. They will receive the Pour Quoi Writing Rubric, and I will explain to help them understand the project. After the first year, I will have some samples of third grade stories to share to the class as examples of what a 1, 2 and 3 rubric story might sound like.

I will read over and explain the "Write Your Own Pour Quoi Story" handout. I will model how to fill it out with my ideas. I will remind the students to remember to use what we have learned from our Native American, Asian, and other tales. When the students have asked all their questions and seem ready to start, I will monitor their progress and walk around the classroom, listening to their discussions, will conference with those students or groups who appear to be struggling, and trying to avoid duplication of ideas within the class.

The writers should be deciding on their *how* or *why* ideas, brainstorming characters, plot points, and the setting. Creating a web or a storyboard may also help in planning.

Some guiding questions might be:

- What drives the main character to act?
- What happens at the beginning?
- What happened in the middle?
- What happens at the end of your story?
- How does the story affect how we see this thing today?
- Does your story make sense?
- Does the story have enough information?
- Does it have too much information?
- Does it tell why or how something is as it is?

The writers have to make decisions about how they wish to present their stories. They will either illustrate or perform them. Time must be allowed for the students to prepare their presentations, which may take several days depending on the students.

The presentations must be shared within the third grade class first. The groups can be paired up, or each group can share one at a time, which provides an opportunity for feedback to improve the performances for the first grade class. The audience will be asked to share one or two positive points about the performance and any suggestions for improvement that might be needed. The teacher should provide a rubric or some suggestions for the students to focus their critical thinking in order to assist them in making positive feedback for their peers.

Then the students will make simple props and costumes to perform their stories. They might wish to create puppets or draw pictures to support their stories. They must focus on presenting the beginning, middle and end of their stories.

Classroom Activities- Additional Articles

We have access to Read Works which is an organization that provides research-based, Common Core-aligned comprehension articles of high quality for k-12 grades. After a quick search of the Read Works or other sites, additional articles with comprehension questions may be located to supplement the unit. I have located these assignments and worksheets: Oral Histories, Making a Storyboard, Ant and Grasshopper, Crow and the Pitcher, and The Star Maiden: Native American Legend, and more are available.

Classroom Activities- Final Project

This culminating activity is designed to be a presentation shared with the first grade class, who will also be doing their own unit about creation tales and pour quoi stories. These presentations will be the first grade's introduction to this genre of writing.

The third grade students will perform their pour quoi stories in front of the first grade class with either a play or an illustrated story version. They may act it out or make puppets. They may create a picture book. They may have a more creative avenue to present the story. No matter which method is selected, a visual and auditory component must go along with their written words. We will do these presentations in the spring.

The following weeks, the third graders will assist the first graders in their quest to develop pour quoi stories. We will repeat our unit with the first grade class, helping them to produce their own pour quoi story or stories.

Teacher Resources

Bruchac, Joseph. *Iroquois Stories Heroes and Heroines Monsters and Magic*.

Tramansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1985. Print.

This books contained many Iroquois fiction stories which explained why things are the way they are today.

Hamilton, Virginia. *In the Beginning Creation Stories from Around the World*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1988. Print.

This book is a collection of creation stories from around the world.

Hogan, Patrick Colm. *How Author's Minds Make Stories*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Print.

This book explains how writers create stories using imagination. He explores works by Austen, Faulkner, Shakespeare, Racine, Brecht, Kafka and Calvino.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Just So Stories*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1996. Print

This is a collection of stories to explain how natural phenomena came to be such as how a camel got its hump.

Lyon, Sophia and Spoerl, Dorothy. *Beginnings: Earth, Sky, Life, Death*. Boston, Ma: Beacon Press, 1958. Print

This book is an introduction to comparative religion for young children.

Savage, Katharine. *The Story of World Religion*. New York, NY: Henry W. Walck, Inc, 1967. Print.

This book is a study of people and their religions. It discusses the development of religion and sets them in a historical background for all to understand.

Appendix

There are several Common Core (CCSS) standards that are addressed throughout this unit. Specifically, I will focus on *Reading Literature 3.2*, we will recount stories including fables, folktales and myths from diverse cultures: determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text. The second standard, *Writing 3.3* we will write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details and clear event sequences. Finally, *Speaking and Listening 3.1*, we will engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

This unit will be divided into three parts: (1) Read and explore pour quoi stories from many varying cultures (2) learn how to write a pour quoi story and the characteristics of this genre of literature and (3) producing a visual presentation of the children's stories.

¹ Lyon, Sophia and Dorothy Spoerl. 30.

² Baruch, 15.

³ Ibid, 3.

⁴Ibid, 4.

⁵Ibid, 2.

⁶ Lyonand Spoerl, 16.

⁷Bruchac, Joseph, 95.

⁸ Lyon and Spoerl, 80.

⁹ Ibid, 79.

¹⁰ Savage, 18.

¹¹Lyon and Spoerl, 63.

¹²bid, 64.

¹³bid, 65.

¹⁴ Savage, 22.

¹⁵ Ibid, 15.

¹⁶ Ibid, 11.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, 12.

²⁰ Ibid, 17.

²¹ Ibid, 13.

²² Ibid, 14.