

Denée Nickel
V00913392
EDCI 302

Title: Exploring Oral Storytelling with a focus on the perspective of First Peoples

Grade: 6

Introduction:

The students would have been introduced to the oral storytelling process, as well as indigenous cultures, beginning with a trip to the Royal BC Museum. This would be a full day activity where the students roam the exhibits that focus on indigenous culture. They would be encouraged to take a look at the indigenous art, cultural



pieces, and listen to the languages. I would also have them search for videos or audio of people being interviewed or orally telling their stories at the museum. This would be a general introduction to indigenous cultures and storytelling, in order to set the stage. I would have them take notes in their journal and we would have a discussion and reflection during the next Language Arts class. After this, we would play a telephone game in order to introduce the oral storytelling aspect of the unit. There would then be a lesson on oral history in indigenous cultures specifically, with references to local First Nations and the students would reflect on any difficulties they had with orally passing on information during the telephone game. They would learn how many First Nations risk losing some of their history if no one passes down their stories. This website is helpful in providing resources and explaining indigenous oral history: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/index-e.html>. The following quote is taken from that website:

“The oral tradition taught history and values and explained the world to young and old. Everything in the universe had a spirit, a place, a time and a story that explained its personality and its relationship to man.”

We would then delve into several specific lesson plans which I will outline below. Keep in mind that the students should already be familiar with the terms: plot, character, setting, moral of a story and point of view. They should also be familiar with the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, etc.) Furthermore, students will have been keeping online portfolios throughout their school year so far.

This learning plan connects to the BC Curriculum for Grade 6 LA in the following ways:

- I. **Big Ideas:**
 - a. Language and text can be a source of creativity and joy.

- b. Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.
- c. Exploring and sharing multiple perspectives extends our thinking.

II. Curricular Competencies:

- a. (Comprehend & Connect)
 - i. Recognize and appreciate the role of story, narrative, and oral tradition in expressing First Peoples perspectives, values, beliefs, and points of view.
 - ii. Recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts.
- b. (Create & Communicate)
 - i. Use and experiment with oral storytelling processes.
 - ii. Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking.

III. Content:

- a. (Strategies & Processes)
 - i. Oral language strategies
- b. (Language Features, Structures, & Conventions)
 - i. Features of oral language

Learning plan:

Throughout this unit, it is recommended to work alongside a member/elder of a local First Nation and consult with them throughout the process in order to avoid appropriation of their culture. It is important to focus on *local* First Nations and stories (place-based learning) so that the material is relevant to the students and their surroundings.

I. Look at what makes a good story:

(Source:

<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/echo07.lan.stories.lporaltrad/storytelling-oral-traditions/>)

- a. Review any existing knowledge the students may have about stories. Write the following questions on the board and have the students discuss and record their comments on the board:
 - i. What is a story? How is a story told?
 - ii. Who tells stories?
 - iii. What makes a good story?

II. Show the **Oral Traditions QuickTime Video** from

<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/echo07.lan.stories.lporaltrad/storytelling-oral-traditions/>

- a. Ask students to think about and discuss what the narrator says about stories. How might she answer the questions we just went over above?

- b. Ask them to reflect on our lesson about oral storytelling in indigenous cultures and think about what it would be like to have no written or electronic way to save a story.

III. Analyzing Oral Stories

(Source: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/index-e.html>)

- a. Explore Indigenous Stories
 - i. Listen to various local indigenous stories online (using the above website or take a look at the Circle of Stories – a collection of five Aboriginal stories recorded by five dynamic Aboriginal storytellers, and presented by PBS)
 - ii. Invite an Elder of a local First Nation to come in and tell a story and allow for questions from the students
 - iii. It may be good to look at non-indigenous oral story-telling as well. This website could be helpful for that: <http://www.heatherforest.com/> (Recommendation: Stone Soup)
- b. Prompt the students to pay attention to (maybe take notes on) anything that helped carry the story along (the tones of voice, the mannerisms, any illustrations, etc.)
 - i. Ask the students if they remember any specifics in the stories and discuss what made those parts stick in their minds.
 - ii. The following quote may be useful (pulled from <https://firstnationspedagogy.ca/storytelling.html>):
 - 1. *“First Nations storytelling involves expert use of the voice, vocal and body expression, intonation, the use of verbal imagery, facial animation, context, plot and character development, natural pacing of the telling, and careful authentic recall of the story”*
- c. Discuss with the students the importance of **listening** → *“Patience and trust are essential for preparing to listen to stories. Listening involves more than just using the auditory sense. Listening encompasses visualizing the characters and their actions and letting the emotions surface. Some say we should listen with three ears: two on our head and one in our heart.”* (Archibald, 1997, p. 10)

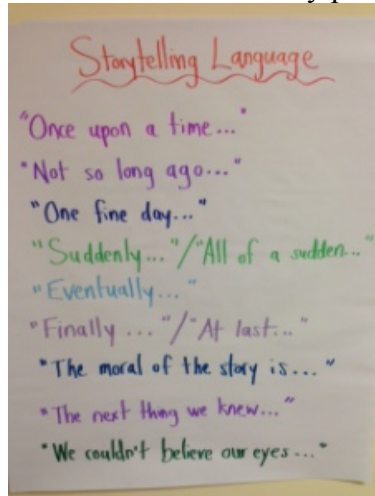
IV. Writing a Cultural Story

(adapted from <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/index-e.html>)

- a. *Starting Activity*: Gather in a circle and practice telling stories and listening to each other
 - i. Leave room for discussion and reflection
- b. Brainstorm/review some important components of storytelling (taken from *“Planning my story telling”* on website above):
 - i. voice intonations
 - ii. characters
 - iii. plot
 - iv. setting
 - v. time
 - vi. theme/lesson
 - vii. visual aids

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- viii. group work (if applies)
- c. Brainstorm/provide tips for storytelling (taken from worksheet found on the website above):
 - i. practice reading stories out loud and listening to audio tapes
 - ii. determine mode of learning:
 - 1. auditory learners (record and listen to your story)
 - 2. visual learners (read your story over and over and look at illustrations)
 - 3. tactile and visual learner (collect objects as cues (dolls, puppets, fur, stones – use them to help you act out story)
 - iii. summarize story on paper – draw setting, characters, event sequence
 - iv. memorize opening and closing of story, important phrases, refrains, dialogues, conversations, morals
 - v. try performing in front of mirror
 - vi. record story to hear how you sound
 - vii. brainstorm a list of story prompts to get students started, e.g.



<https://twowritingteachers.org/2014/04/06/a-mini-crash-course-on-oral-storytelling/>

- d. *Assignment:* students write their own original story
 - i. Each learner will create their own story over the course of a few days or a week and tell it to the class at some point
 - ii. It might be a good idea to take a walk through the forest in order for some personal reflection time and allow the students to gain some inspiration. It is also recommended that the students are made aware they will be writing their own story near the beginning of the unit, in order to get a head start on thinking about what they would like to write about.
 - iii. Encourage students to practice telling their story at home, paying attention to voice intonation, character building, plot development, visual aids, and emphasize the theme or the lesson of the story
 - iv. Encourage them to gather visual aids (and provide some for them in class)
- e. Students present their oral stories:
 - i. Assign the students partners so that they can peer-assess (in the form of positive descriptive feedback)

- ii. Students should also self-assess
- iii. Have a discussion at the end of the presentations
 - 1. Ask the students questions about what they got out of the experience, if they remember important points from each of the stories, and make connections to indigenous oral storytelling traditions

V. **Extension (if time for a longer unit): Live Storytelling**

(taken from <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/index-e.html>)

- a. Allow the class to select a story for the class to perform. (It may be one of the stories from the website, a story found through a library, or one of the stories written by the students.)
- b. Make sure the story can be performed easily. It should have a simple plot with few characters.
- c. Over the course of 2 to 4 classes, students will be immersed in the story, reading it over several times to recall all the main parts.
- d. Divide up the story into the beginning, middle and end. Have students identify the important parts of the plot and characters.
- e. Write a class synopsis on a piece of chart paper for everyone to see. Together, summarize the story in point form.
- f. Practice retelling the story, as a class, first with and then without the summarized points of the text. As a group, incorporate some of the Storytelling Hints to get the students accustomed to oral storytelling techniques.
- g. Divide the class into 2 groups. Each group will perform the story separately.
- h. Divide up the parts of the story for each group. Assign a part of the story to each student.
- i. Have each student re-write their part of the story in their own words.
- j. Ensure that each group reads through all of their scenes aloud to check for continuity. Each part of the story should flow smoothly into the next to create a cohesive whole.
- k. Students should edit the scenes to achieve an even flow in the script, as necessary.
- l. Have each group practice the story and make a plan for how they would like to perform or “tell” it.
- m. Encourage students to be creative. Add music, props, incorporate costumes, sounds or rhythmic movements. Each group should incorporate at least 3 to 4 ideas from Storytelling Hints.
- n. **Further extension:** Students may wish to act out the story behind a lit screen (a bed sheet can be hung up that is back-lit by an overhead projector to achieve this).

Environment:

This unit will take place in various areas. As mentioned above, they will have gone to the Royal BC Museum and there will also be a forest walk in order to gain inspiration for story-writing. The students should be encouraged to continue to brainstorm and work on their stories at home as well, this provides them with the opportunity to work on their story in their room, at the kitchen table, outside, etc. During class time I would try to be flexible in terms of working spaces for the students to write out their stories or brainstorm – they could work at their tables, on the

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carpet, in the reading nook (if there is one), or just outside the classroom. I would make use of the carpet area, any sort of comfy seating area, or even outside for any of the oral storytelling. It would be ideal to involve the students in deciding where they would like to listen to and present their stories, and suggest some options if needed.

Curricular integration:

- *Social studies* → Indigenous cultures/traditions, oral history, cultures and traditions of others (fellow students)
- *Art* → provide opportunity for students to create illustrations along with their oral story – relating art to a story
- *Theatre/drama* → relates through the acting out and telling of stories to an audience (especially the live storytelling extension activity)

Materials needed:

- Any of the websites mentioned above to access oral stories to show the students
- Computer, Projector, and screen
- Writing utensils and paper if kids need to write down text or illustrate pictures
- Paper (both lined and unlined)
- Could print out handouts for students to follow along during lesson plans
- Could make or print out illustrations to go along with the oral story-telling examples
- Provide several props for students to choose from if they would like to use them in their stories

Adaptations for students who need it:

- This unit provides the opportunity for students to tell their story in a way that best reflects their identity and culture. Students should be given encouragement and flexibility in the manner in which they choose to present that story (dance, song, digital format, etc.)
- Give students the option to record themselves and simply submit, or *choose* to show to class if they have trouble with public speaking (although try to encourage stepping out of comfort zone)
- Option for creating illustrations and using props if needed for carrying story along
- Option to work in partners or alone
- Make sure there are step-by-step instructions on a handout for students to use to follow along if they have a hard time keeping track

Extensions:

- Discussion of what they understood about each other's culture (cultural lesson).
- Provide opportunity for students to discuss how their understanding of culture and storytelling has changed.
- Recommend that students find opportunities to tell their stories in public or to family members
- Encourage them to think up another, possibly more meaningful, story – now that they understand the process.
- Live Storytelling extension, as listed above

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Assessment:

- It is recommended to collaborate with students on criteria and how to assess the assignment → brainstorm criteria for the assignment and write on chart paper. Have suggestions ready (examples provided below), in order to make sure everything important is covered.
- *Formative* assessment ideas:
 - Checklist, with criteria on it, which students may use to self-assess themselves → can use multiple times throughout the process
 - Self and peer assess as mentioned previously → could be as simple as writing a short comment that is reflective and contains positive, descriptive feedback.
 - Online portfolios: record the presentations on video, upload them to each portfolio, and write descriptive feedback comments for each student (formative assessment)
- *Summative* assessment ideas:
 - Could use a T-chart and place the brainstormed criteria ideas on one side and assess on the other side of the chart whether or not the criteria have been met or not.
 - Could use a rubric, the following example was pulled from <https://twowritingteachers.org/2014/04/06/a-mini-crash-course-on-oral-storytelling/>, although I would use it with the BC Curriculum Performance Scale:

ORAL PREPARATION				
	Mastery	Intermediate	Beginner	Emerging
Voice: Easily heard; strong and effective tone inflection; clear enunciation				
Body language: Moves body and hands to improve telling of story				
Audience engagement: Makes eye contact with audience; holds attention; full concentration on audience				
Characters: Uses different voices for different characters; turns body to indicate different characters				
Pacing: Effective pacing; strong beginning and ending				

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STORY PREPARATION				
	Mastery	Intermediate	Beginner	Emerging
Story selection: Chooses appropriate story for oral telling				
Plot: Correctly identifies plot sequence in Story Mountain				
Dynamics: Thoroughly notates story in preparation for telling				

- Below are several *criteria ideas* which can be used as benchmarks for assessment, pulled from <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/index-e.html>:
 - o Participation:
 - Actively listens and comments appropriately (as in a conversation/class discussion).
 - Makes connections to previous learning, experiences, readings or other classes.
 - Always prepared/participates in all activities/class discussions.
 - Shows joyfulness and appreciation for material presented and responds accordingly.
 - Shows great commitment and interest in learning.
 - Always focused/not distracted or tired.
 - Insightful conversations and discussions.
 - Prepared/knowledgeable about topic being shared in class.
 - Always respectful of others during discussions and sharing times.
 - Interacts with peers and instructors during class.
 - “Piggybacks” or expands on others' ideas.
 - Demonstrates politeness and appropriate behavior, shows excitement.
 - Demonstrates genuine interest in the subject matter.
 - o Writing a Story:
 - Story Sequence
 - Student competently orders story ideas into a beginning, middle and end.
 - Vocabulary Choice
 - Student consistently includes details, descriptions, language from the story in the re-write.

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Extra resource:

(pulled from <https://twowritingteachers.org/2014/04/06/a-mini-crash-course-on-oral-storytelling/>)

Coaching Moves for Oral Storytelling in Writing Workshop

If...	Then...
Child does not speak after modeling and/or prompting	Try asking a yes/no question, then prompt student to say the words. Example: Is this you in the picture? (Yes) Who is this? (Me) Example: Is this a tree in your picture? (Yes) What is it? (A tree)
Child points, labels, or gives one word responses	Coach student to put it in a simple sentence. Try modeling first, then asking student to say it back. Or try prompting by saying the first part of the sentence and child says the rest.
Child uses short simple sentences	Model richer language, slightly more complex sentences. Try sentence starters that stretch a simple sentence to a more sophisticated idea. “Eventually...” “Although...” “Even though...”
Child’s story is out of order	Use prompts that support sequencing. “First... then... next... after... finally...” or “One day... after that... eventually... at last...” Touch one finger for each part of the story you model, or for each part of the story the child tells, as a visual support for sequencing.
Child lists everything that happens in the story with little or no elaboration	Try an open-ended prompt for more detail. “Say more about that...” “What else...” “Tell me more...” Coach child to slow down, saying a lot about each small step in the story. Model telling a part of the story with richer language and more detail, then give the child a chance to tell the next part.