

Legends of our Time

Activity Information

Grade Appropriate Level: Grade 4-7

Duration: 2 forty-minute class periods (homework may need to be assigned to complete this writing assignment)

Materials: floor space, chalkboard or chart paper, chalk or large marker, 1 copy of each of 7 legends enclosed in package, classroom dictionary, and for each student a pencil, work sheet, paper to write (or type) a story and a self-evaluation and peer-evaluation form

Objective



The purpose of this lesson is to foster in students a deeper understanding and appreciation for First Nations legends, stories and storytelling. The lesson will provide them with background knowledge to write their own legend and to practice their presentation skills in a storytelling group.

Note: This lesson was designed to precede *Masks, Bringing a Legend to Life*, the art lesson that is enclosed in this package.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

English Language Arts, Social Studies, Personal Planning

- Demonstrate pride and satisfaction in using language to create and express thoughts, ideas, and feelings in a variety of oral, written, and electronic forms
- Apply the basic rules and conventions of writing or speaking for the oral, visual, and written forms they select
- Demonstrate confidence in their abilities to communicate effectively in a variety of classroom situations
- Revise and edit their own work for content and clarity
- Appraise their own and others' work and make suggestions for revision
- Express ideas and emotions using verbal and non-verbal communication
- Demonstrate awareness and appreciation of various Aboriginal cultures in Canada
- Demonstrate appreciation of contributions of Aboriginal peoples

Introductory Activity

- Open the lesson with a class discussion about legends. On a chalkboard or chart, write LEGENDS in the center of a large space and ask students to share ideas about what that word means. As they offer their ideas, write them onto the chalkboard surrounding the center area. The goal is to brainstorm a variety of accurate describing words that will help to define what legends are.
- Once the students have offered several descriptors, go back through them one by one and determine aloud which words should stay and which should be erased or crossed out. Students can help you make these choices by justifying their answers.

- Finally, have a student read aloud the definition of 'legend' from a class dictionary. An example from an Oxford Dictionary reads: legend - story (true or invented) handed down from the past, myth; such stories collectively



- Check back to see if any student ideas were accurate. At this time, ask the students if they know of any popular legends that they could briefly describe. As students share their thoughts, ensure that they can justify why their story fits into the 'legend' description.
- When you are comfortable that all of the students have a solid understanding of what a

legend is you will introduce them to the topic of First Nations legends. Some students may not have studied such legends before, so it is important to mention that First Nations people are known to be very connected to nature, the environment and to all animals and living things. They will notice that, to some degree, First Nations legends generally revolve around these themes and often explore moral issues and lessons.

Suggested Instructional Strategies

Lesson Part A

- Let the students know that they'll become storytellers for this lesson. A good idea is to review student behaviour expectations prior to beginning. In addition to regular class expectations of cooperation and good listening skills, students should demonstrate respect for the storyteller by paying attention and not speaking out. This is a very important aspect of traditional storytelling.
- Reading in groups is also a great opportunity for students to practice their presentations skills. They should be reminded to use a clear, projected voice and to take time to use facial expressions, eye contact and voice intonation to help bring the story to life.
- Divide the students appropriately into seven even groups (4 or 5 students maximum per group) and provide floor space for each group to have a quiet area for reading in a circle. While seated on the floor, all students should be able to see one another. While this is a more traditional way for storytellers to share with a group, it is a fun way to demonstrate a style of reading from a different cultural perspective.
- Start by sharing this brief introduction to the author, George Blondin, who wrote each of the stories they are about to read.



George Blondin is a Dene Elder who was born in 1923 in the Northwest Territories. He has been a wilderness guide, a miner, a trapper, Vice President of the Dene Nation, and in 1989 was elected chairman of the Denendah Elder's Council. He now works part-time with the Dene Cultural Institution and writes articles for local newspapers. In 1990, Mr. Blondin was the recipient of the annual Ross Charles award for native journalism. He is the author of When the World Was New and Legends and Stories from the Past.

- Give each group one of George Blondin's "Legends and Stories from the Past". They should glance over the story and use a pencil mark to divide up the story into even sections for each student to read. Once the story is divided up, the first student can begin reading. Note: You could save time by dividing up the stories in advance if you have established the numbers of students that will be in each group.
- Instruct the groups to choose one student to start reading and to continue until they are finished their portion of the story. Without any interruptions, the first reader should pass the story to the next student in the circle and continue this pattern until the story is finished. The teacher should circulate the room to listen in on the stories and to observe student behaviour and engagement in the storytelling.

Lesson Part B



- After each group finishes reading their story, provide them with a few minutes to talk about the story. What did they think of it? Did one part of the story stand out to them? Had they heard of the story before? Do they recognize what makes this story a legend?
- While the groups are in discussion, hand out the "Legends of our Time" work sheet to each student. Have the students remain in their groups to complete the work sheet together and then hand it in as a group. (When marking the work sheet, having the sheets grouped according to the story groups may help you to assess each student's output in comparison to their group members.)
- Take a few minutes for a spokesperson from each group to share their story highlights aloud for the class to hear.

Lesson Part C

- Students will now have the opportunity to write their own legend based on the following criteria. You may wish to alter the criteria based on your students' ability levels and needs.

Legends must meet the following criteria:

- Original idea, not copied from a popular story they've heard of before
 - Story should be based on theme of nature, animals, family, connection to earth and/or environment with a lesson or message learned
 - 1 or 2 main characters are developed in the story
 - Student has developed ideas clearly and logically with details, examples and explanations
 - Language is clear, varied and flows smoothly
 - Variety in sentences and paragraphs are structured with strong topic sentence and supporting sentences
 - Correct basic sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - Effective opening of story that progresses with linking words and connecting ideas that end with a purposeful closure to the story
 - 1-2 pages in length
 - Neatly handwritten (double spaced) or typed
 - Creative title page that includes the story title and coloured illustration of a favourite part of their story
- Review the assessment criteria with students prior to beginning the writing of their story. You can have students brainstorm (plan) the story for you to check before starting, though this study offers a good opportunity to just 'go with the flow' as is often practiced in traditional storytelling. Students should, however, be given time to self or peer edit their stories (according to the above checklist) prior to handing in their good copy.
 - Give students time to write in class and provide them opportunities to share thoughts with you during the writing process. You may wish to provide extra time in class for the entire assignment or assign the completion of the story for homework based on the flexibility of your classroom schedule.
 - Prior to marking the students' legends, place them in their original or new groupings to share their completed work. If time permits, you may choose to have each student share their legend before the whole class, or half the class as this assignment lends itself perfectly to public speaking skills.
 - After each child shares his or her legend, have the authors fill out a self-evaluation of their writing assignment and have the audience fill in a peer-evaluation of their storytelling skills and story review. This will provide students with important feedback to assist and support them in future writing/sharing assignments. (In order to receive more constructive and thorough feedback from peers, you may ask that students submit a peer-



- evaluation only for those students they worked with during Lesson A.)
- Close the lesson by having a discussion with the class about what they've learned about First Nations legends. You may want to revisit the chart you created in the opening lesson and add (or alter) the original ideas that the students shared. What have they learned about this important and enjoyable cultural tradition?

Suggested Assessment Strategies

Lesson A

Assessment for each student should be based on your observations during the group readings of one of George Blondin's stories. Are the students being attentive and respectful of the reader? Are they demonstrating good listening skills? Is the storyteller following the suggested criteria for reading aloud?

Lesson B



Assessment for each student should be based on your observations of the students as they debrief what they learned from the stories. Is the student actively participating in the discussion? Is the student offering to share and compare thoughts and ideas?

The work sheet should be marked according to how much effort students have put into their written answers. Has the student noted important points as outlined? Has the student expanded on the answers in order to give a clear and thorough description of what they learned from the story that was shared? Do the answers demonstrate a good understanding of the story and its purpose?

Lesson C

Assessment for each student should be based on:

- achievement of the criteria for the writing assignment.
- the ability to share their legend with the class, or small group.

An additional mark or extra comment about the presentation can be added to the evaluation that is returned to each student. You should also note how carefully and thoughtfully that each student completed his or her self and peer evaluation sheets.



Suggested Extensions

- Share more popular First Nations legends with your students and complete an aboriginal author study. You can choose books listed in the spiral-bound book selection that is enclosed in this teacher package, or ask your librarian to suggest some titles that are available in your school library.
- Invite a First Nations storyteller into your classroom to share a favourite legend with your students.
- Use drama to act out some or all of the legends written by your students and consider presenting them to a small audience in your school. Or, choose a famous legend you've shared with the class from a book and develop a small play to share with your school.
- Follow this "Legends in Time" lesson plan with the accompanying Art lesson that is enclosed in this teacher package.
- Have students work in pairs or small groups and tape-record them as they tell their story. Share the video with the class and learn how to develop stronger presentation skills.



Revisit the web site address in order to share other stories from George Blondin's collection. Teachers are permitted to download the whole collection for class use.

http://siksik.learnnet.nt.ca/02%20k_12/02_15%20legends/contents.html

Legends of our Time

Work sheet

Name _____

Name of story studied _____

Complete the following questions. Give enough detail to fully support your answers.

A.) Write a full paragraph summary of what the story is about. Be sure to include all of the most important ideas.

B.) What makes this story of George Blondin's a legend? Explain your answer below. Use details from the story to support your answer.

C.) What was the most important thing/s that the author wanted the reader to learn? How did he achieve that in this story?

Legends of our Time
Self-evaluation

Name_____

Title of my legend_____

Answer the following questions about your completed assignment.

Describe the basic plot of your legend in the area below.

How would you describe the overall 'theme' of your legend?

Tell me what you like the most about your story. Then, list 2 different parts of the legend that you think are the most important things the reader needs to know and explain why.

Describe the important characteristics of 2 characters in your story. Include the names of the characters as well.

Legends of our Time
Peer-evaluation

Name_____

Title of the legend_____

Answer the questions in the space provided below.

What was the theme of this legend?

What is something positive that this author achieved? Give a specific answer so that the author can learn from your feedback.

What is something you would suggest that this author needs to work on in the area of writing legends? Is there a particular part of the story that you would change? How so?

Offer 2 points of feedback about this author's presentation of their legend to the class. For example: I liked how the storyteller.....OR I wondered why the storyteller did.....because..... OR I think that the storyteller should have.....because.....

