

BOXTALES Theatre Company

B'rer Rabbit and Other Trickster Tales from Around the World

Teacher Guide
K-6

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Boxtales is a storytelling theatre company which uses masks, movement, storytelling and live music to present myths and folklore from around the world. Performers Matt Tavianini, Deven Sisler, and Michael Andrews combine their diverse talents to create a professional, high energy, highly interactive theatrical experience for young audiences.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This production, includes stories directed by renowned Mexican theater artist Sigfrido Aguilar, and master teacher, performer, director, James Donlon. With masks designed by Ann Chevrefils this show explores the rich Indigenous and Hispanic folklore and mythology of Latin America. The stories include

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the definition and understand elements of fables and trickster stories
- Recognize, Ananse spider stories, and related tales from various cultures
- List human traits associated with particular animals in fables and trickster stories
- Identify the specific narrative and thematic patterns that occur in many fables across cultures
- Compare and contrast themes of trickster tales from different cultures
- Explain how fables and trickster tales are used in different cultural contexts to point out human strengths and weaknesses
- Differentiate between the cautionary lessons and morals of fables and the celebration of the wiles and wit of the underdog in trickster stories.
- To introduce students to classic trickster stories from around the world.
- To introduce students to traditional Afro-Cuban Rhythms played on authentic instruments.
- To encourage students to seek out and read other trickster stories.

- To help develop creative imaginations.
- To introduce the importance of oral tradition as an educational tool.
- To create an appreciation and affection for live stage performance

PREPARATION FOR THE PROGRAM

Fables and Trickster Tales Around the World

Introduction

Fables and trickster stories are short narratives that use animal characters with human features to convey folk wisdom and to help us understand human nature and human behavior. These stories were originally passed down through oral tradition and were eventually written down. The legendary figure Aesop was reported to have orally passed on his animal fables, which have been linked to earlier beast tales from India and were later written down by the Greeks and Romans. Ananse trickster tales derive from the Asante people of Ghana and were brought by African slaves to the Caribbean and parts of the U.S. These tales developed into Brer Rabbit stories and were written down in the 19th century in the American South.

The following lessons introduce children to folk tales through a literary approach that emphasizes genre categories and definitions. In this unit, students will become familiar with fables and trickster tales from different cultural traditions and will see how stories change when transferred orally between generations and cultures. They will learn how both fables and trickster tales use various animals in different ways to portray human strengths and weaknesses in order to pass down wisdom from one generation to the next.

This unit is related to the lesson [Aesop and Ananse: Animal Fables and Trickster Tales](#), which provides the same background information for the teacher with different activities appropriate for students in grades K-2. Please note that different versions of spellings of "Ananse" and "Anansi," and of "Asante," "Ashante," and "Ashanti" exist.

Guiding Question:

What is a fable, and how are fables different from other types of stories? What is a trickster tale, and how is it different from other types of tales and from fables? How have fables and trickster tales been passed down through time and around the world? Which human qualities have been associated with different animals? Why do fables and trickster tales use animals to point out complexities in human nature and feelings? What kinds of wisdom about human nature and human behavior do we learn from fables, and how is this wisdom relevant today?

Preparing to Teach this Lesson

- Review each lesson in this unit and select archival materials you'd like to use in class. If possible, bookmark these materials, along with other useful Web sites; download and print out selected documents and duplicate copies as necessary for student viewing.
- Visit the [Asante Information](#) page in [Peoples Resources](#) at [Art and Life in Africa Online](#) for background on the Asante people and the cultural context of their stories. Additional information on Ghana, as well as a list of further online resources, may be found at the [Ghana page](#) of the EDSITEment-reviewed [African Studies WWW](#).
- Another source that offers background information on folktales and fables from India, the [General Notes](#) from [Joseph Jacobs' Indian Fairy Tales](#), located on the EDSITEment-reviewed Web site [Internet Public Library](#), discusses the lineage of Indian fables and the relationship between Indian and European fables. The [General Notes](#) state that, "When the Hindu reaction against Buddhism came, the Brahmins adapted these [Jatakas], with the omission of Buddha as the central figure. There is scarcely any doubt that the so-called *Fables of Bidpai* were thus derived from Buddhistic sources. In its Indian form this is now extant as a *Panchatantra* or *Pentateuch*, five books of tales connected by a Frame. This collection is of special interest to us in the present connection, as it has come to Europe in various forms and shapes."
- In the [Preface](#) to his [Indian Fairy Tales](#), Joseph Jacobs writes, "There are even indications of an earlier literary contact between Europe and India, in the case of one branch of the folk-tale, the Fable or Beast Droll. In a somewhat elaborate discussion ["History of the Aesopic Fable," the introductory volume to my edition of Caxton's *Fables of Esope* (London, Nutt, 1889)] I have come to the conclusion that a goodly number of the fables that pass under the name of the Samian slave, Aesop, were derived from India, probably from the same source whence the same tales were utilised in the Jatakas, or Birth-stories of Buddha."

Suggested Activities

[Lesson 1: Telling Stories - Writing Stories](#)

[Lesson 2: Fables and Tales from Different Cultures](#)

[Lesson 3: Sly as a Fox; Busy as a Bee](#)

[Lesson 4: The Moral of the Story](#)

[Extending the Lesson](#)

Lesson 1 Telling Stories - Writing Stories

Read to the class the Asante tale from West Africa, "Ananse's Stories," which tells how a certain type of story came to be called [Ananse Stories](#).

Point out the last two lines of the story as a piece of folk wisdom, a typical ending element of Ananse tales:

"And from that day the stories of the Ashante people and their descendants in the

West Indies have been called Ananse Stories."

"And that is why Old People say: If yu follow trouble, trouble follow yu."

Have students identify characteristics of this story and use this list of elements to collaboratively devise a definition of a fable or trickster tale as a short narrative that uses animal characters with human features to convey some universal truth about human nature and human behavior and to pass down wisdom from earlier generations in ways that can be used for present-day situations. Point out to students that, while fables tend to end in moral or cautionary lessons, trickster tales often celebrate values or actions that are disapproved of by society but that may be necessary for the survival and success of the small and weak; together, fables and trickster stories allow us to see the complexities of the human character. Ask students what they think about the Spider character in the story, whether they like him and his actions, and why? Why is Spider called a "trickster"?

Discuss with students the notion of "the talking drum," a story that is passed orally through generations and cultures, and that changes as it moves from person to person and from place to place. Discuss with students the differences between telling and writing stories, and ask them what the advantages and disadvantages are of the oral and written forms. Have students retell the tale from "Ananse's Stories" and note how the story changes in the retelling.

Lesson 2 Fables and Tales from Different Cultures

The following stories involve cases where the less powerful of two animals (including one human) who are natural enemies frees the more powerful animal. The divergent responses of the animals freed lead to different lessons about human behavior and values. Using the chart below, have students identify the characters, problem and solution, and moral of these fables.

["The Lion and the Mouse" \(Aesop\)](#)
[\(another version\)](#)

["Mr. Buffu and the Snake" \(Ananse\)](#)(scroll down)

["The Ungrateful Tiger" \(Korean\)](#)

Have students fill out an online version or printed-out version of the Story Structure Chart:

	Title	Title	Title	Title
Story Elements				
Characters				
Problem				
Solution				
Lesson/Moral				

Ask students to compare the characters, plot, and lessons of these stories. Which characters did they like best? Which did they like least? Which story had the best ending? The best moral? To see how fables teach universal lessons about human nature and behavior, ask students to think of a real-life situation that applies to one of the stories.

B) Divide students into small groups and give each group one of the following fables/tales, located through the EDSITEment-reviewed Web site [Internet Public Library](#), that offer lessons on the [dangers of being too clever](#):

1. The Fish That Were Too Clever (India, The *Panchatantra*).
2. The Fox and the Cat (Aesop).
3. The Cat and the Fox (France, Jean de La Fontaine).
4. The Fox and the Cat (Germany, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm).
5. The Seven-Witted Fox and the One-Witted Owl (Romania).
6. The Fox and His Bagful of Wits and the One-Witted Hedgehog (Romania).
7. The Fox and the Hedgehog (South Slavonic).
8. The Tiger Finds a Teacher (China).

Have each group fill out the Story Structure Chart from Lesson 2A for their particular fable or tale. Ask students to compare the animals and their behavior in each story: Why do the types of animals change or not from one culture's fable to the next? How does the behavior change according to the type of animal? What types of behaviors lead to what types of endings in these stories?

Lesson 3 Sly as a Fox; Busy as a Bee

In fables and trickster tales, certain animals are associated with certain human traits - which animals have which human traits in which cultures? Do you associate these animals with the traits given to them in the stories?

Have students fill out the following chart online or as a downloaded, printed document. Ask them to list the animals in the fables they have read and heard, and then to list the corresponding traits. Then, ask students to add their own animals to the chart and to provide traits that they associate with these animals.

	Animal	Traits

From Stories		
Add Your Own		

Ask students what animal they would choose to be and why? What traits do they associate with their chosen animal? Could they think of a new form of made-up animal and give it the traits they would like to see in humans?

Lesson 4 The Moral of the Story

Often fables and trickster tales illustrate how a smaller or weaker animal uses cunning to outwit a stronger, more powerful animal. Why would this theme occur repeatedly in so many stories and across countries and cultures? What implications do such stories have for human society?

Look at the list of "[Selected Aesop's Fables](#)," located through the EDSITEment-reviewed Web site [Internet Public Library](#) and discuss the moral listed. Have students choose a moral and write an original fable to go with it, or have students make up their own fable with an original lesson/moral.

Extending the Lesson

- The American stories referred to as Brer Rabbit stories are actually Ananse Stories (the wise trickster spider) that were brought to the United States and the Caribbean by African-American slaves. To develop a history of this type of fable, have students trace the connections between the two sets of stories and locate the places in Africa and the U.S. and Caribbean where they stories are found. This topic also brings up questions about the roles and identities of the people who created the stories versus those who eventually wrote them down - Who is telling the story? Whose story is it? What is the relationship of the writer towards his or her characters?
- In their analysis of [Uncle Remus' Songs and Sayings](#) (selected text), located through the EDSITEment-reviewed Web site [American Studies at the University of Virginia](#), Melissa Murray and Dominic Perella discuss the attitudes and intentions of Joel Chandler Harris, author of the Uncle Remus tales, in relation to the implications of the tales themselves:
 - "Readers of Harris' Uncle Remus folk tales might be tempted to assume, as we were early in our research for this project, that the

author had some kind of secret racial egalitarian agenda. Many of the stories he relates through Remus are clearly subversive of American apartheid's hierarchies. They spring from a tradition with roots in Africa, and also in Northern and Eastern Europe - the animal tale, with moral lessons about escape from submission and the value of cunning. In the hands of black Southerners in the nineteenth century, such stories clearly addressed their submissive situation. However, the tales must have had a second role as pure entertainment: if the stories were seen as basically subversive by their black tellers, would they have dared relate them to their white masters or bosses? One would doubt it, especially in the tense racial atmosphere of the 1880s and '90s."

- "Harris's understanding of his task is shaped by the latter definition; he sees the recording of Southern blacks' "poetic imagination" and "quaint and homely humor" as entertainment for whites and as a valuable anthropology of sorts, the preservation of a fading, picturesque voice. What Harris, a man who despite his anthropological efforts subscribed to most of his culture's white-superiority beliefs, failed to see is that the tales he recorded for posterity undermined the very culture he worked to stimulate" ([*Remus Tales: Selected Text*](#)).
- The following commentary serves as context for the first story of the collection, "[Uncle Remus Initiates the Little Boy](#)" to the students. This story could be read to students and discussed in comparison to other animal tales in the lesson.
- "This tale functions as an important component of the larger text, *Legends of the Old Plantation*, in that it introduces the primary characters and establishes the stylistic form of the text. Immediately, the reader is introduced to Uncle Remus, Miss Sally, and the little boy; through the stories of Uncle Remus, we are introduced to the principal animal characters, Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox. One important aspect of the text's narrative style is the limited view that the reader gets of the characters. When we first are introduced to Uncle Remus, we do not see him as a first person narrator, but rather through the eyes of Miss Sally, whom we see through the eyes of an anonymous limited narrator. This is important to the text because it establishes a pattern of limited insight to the minds of the human characters, while more detail is given to the thoughts of the animal characters. Harris also introduces the conflict of many of the animal tales, the pursuit of Brer Rabbit and his escape through the use of wit and cunning."
- "The tale also establishes the pattern in which the stories are told--by an elderly former slave to the young grandson of his former master. It is significant the Harris' storyteller be an elderly former slave. In this way, Uncle Remus provides a direct link to a past and culture that is quickly slipping away. For Harris, an advocate of preserving the Southern literary heritage in the wake of the encroaching industrial expansion of the New South, the decision to commit the oral slave tradition to written form was a self-conscious attempt to solidify and

preserve an endangered remnant of the old plantation culture. Moreover, the recording of these tales by Harris through the stories of Uncle Remus was a step toward the diversification of Southern literature. During the Reconstruction era, there was little African-American writing in the national level, and still less on the regional and local levels. Thus, the stories of Uncle Remus filled a tremendous void in acknowledging the culture of the African-American slaves, as well as the plantation culture Harris wanted to preserve" (*Editor's Commentary of "[Uncle Remus Initiates the Little Boy.](#)"*)

- The legendary figure of Aesop is reported to have been a Samarian slave: "...it can cautiously be said that Aesop was probably a slave in the sixth century B.C., that he probably came from Phrygia and then lived in Samos, that he had a knack for "fables" (logoi) and that he became famous and gained his freedom on this account" - Leo Groarke Wilfrid, [The Recent Life of Aesop](#). This point could extend the discussion of Lesson 4: The Moral of the Story, and lead to a discussion of the Aesop's fables and Uncle Remus stories in relation to slavery and unequal relations between different groups of humans.
 - The EDSITEment-reviewed Web site [American Studies at the University of Virginia](#) has created one of its [Ongoing Hypertext Projects](#) on Joel Chandler Harris' [Uncle Remus and His Friends](#) (1892). The Web site, *Melissa Murray and Dominic Perella on Joel Chandler Harris, [Uncle Remus](#)* provides several Uncle Remus stories from Harris' book, accompanied by the editors' own social and historical commentary; background and contextual information on the Uncle Remus stories and on Harris, including four contemporary reviews of the Uncle Remus collections; a biography of Joel Chandler Harris; and some other essays and tales written by Harris that indicate Harris' attitude towards race relations.
 - This online text, "Uncle Remus: Social Context and Ramifications" offer primary sources - original text and images - and their own commentaries in order to "make observations about post-Civil War black culture, and Southern society in general, using the stories and the reactions they engendered as points of reference ... [and] offer other students of the South one or two new insights into the region's endlessly complex myths and meanings" (*Melissa Murray and Dominic Perella on Joel Chandler Harris, [Uncle Remus.](#)*)
- Explain the differences between myths, legends, fairy tales, and fables. Give some examples of each type of story and let students sort them by category, or ask students to research their own examples of each of these narrative forms.

Selected EDSITEment Websites

- [African Studies WWW](#)

- [K-12 Electronic Guide for African Resources on the Internet](#)
 - [K-12 Educational Resources \(U of Wisconsin-Madison\)](#)
 - [Bibliography on African Storytelling](#)

- [American Studies at the University of Virginia](#)

- [Cultural Objects: An Anthology of American Studies, Vol. II: Spring 1996](#)
 - [Cultural Objects Table of Contents](#)
 - *Melissa Murray and Dominic Perella on Joel Chandler Harris, [Uncle Remus](#)*

- [Ongoing Hypertext Projects](#)

- [Joel Chandler Harris, Uncle Remus](#)

- ["Uncle Remus Initiates the Little Boy"](#)

- [Editor's Commentary of "Uncle Remus Initiates the Little Boy"](#)
 - [Art and Life in Africa Online](#)
 - [Peoples Resources](#)
 - [Asante Information page](#)

- [Asia Source](#)
 - ["The Ungrateful Tiger"](#)

- [Internet Public Library](#)

- [Pathfinder: Fairy Tales Reading and Research](#)
 - [Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts](#)
 - [Aesop's Fables: Online Collection](#)

- [Selected Aesop's Fables](#)
 - [The Fox and the Cat](#) and other fables of Aarne-Thompson type 105 about the dangers of being too clever

- [Indian Fairy Tales, Jacobs, Joseph](#)

EDSITEment Partner Site Resources:

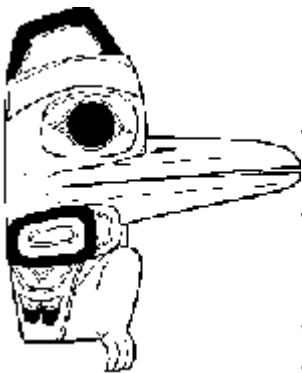
ARTSEEDGE Lesson Plans:

- [Exaggeration, Folktales, and Characters](#)

THE STORIES

Raven and the Man that sits on the tides

A Telling by [Eldrbarry](#)



Long ago the oceans had no tides and the shores no shallows. Raven knew there was lots of food in the sea - oysters and clams, mussels and crabs. But how to get to it? He was lazy and preferred getting into mischief.. Raven wondered, "If only there was a way to move the water out of the way, so I could gather food from the sea!"

Raven, he knew nothing about the sea, but knew the Fog Man did. He would find the Fog man and ask him. Raven started asking around. He asked the sandpipers, and like a single bird, the flock darted and swooped this way and that, but Raven could not figure out which way they wanted him to go. Raven asked the gulls, but they seemed to be lost souls endlessly searching themselves. Raven asked the Cormorants, perched like lonely sentinels on the offshore rocks but they didn't know where The Fog Man was to be found either.

Finally Raven decided to look far to the north, where the fogs came from. He searched until one day he saw a island bouncing from wave to wave, like a raft free of its moorings. On it was a wrinkled old man with a long straggly beard. When he saw the Raven coming, he snatched up his hat and pulled it down on his head. Fog began to pour out from under it's brim, hiding the fog man and his island.

Raven swooped down and snatched off his hat. "What, do you throw a fog in a friend's face."

"Hey, Raven! Give me my hat, I've fog to make." He cried.

Raven asked: "Why do you make fog anyway."

"It's my job. It's what I do, I'm the Fog Man."

"Well do you know how the sea can be moved away from the shore?"

"I don't know, please give me my hat, the sun is getting too warm."

"Do you know someone I could ask?"

"Go ask the Man who sits on the Tide."

"What is the tide? And why does he sit on it? Where do I find him?"

The Fog Man pleaded: "Please leave me my hat, and go to where the sun sleeps."

Raven laughed "I'll just take your hat. It's time we had a sunny day"



Leaving the Fog Man cursing on the shore, Raven flew towards the setting sun. For many days, he pursued the sun and was just about to give up his search when he spotted a solitary Rock crag, with sea birds swooping around its head and shoulders. Raven was about to ask the birds, when the crag yawned, then it blinked. What looked like a rock, was a giant man, sitting in the water. Three times Raven asked him: "Have you seen the man who sits on the Tide?" with no answer, but the fourth the Giant roared "I AM THE MAN WHO SITS ON THE TIDE!!" His breath blew Raven back several miles.

Avoiding his mouth, Raven shouted in his ear. "Do you know the secret of how to move the sea aside?"

"I KNOW MANY SECRETS, BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER THEM"

"Well maybe if you told me one, it would jog your memory."

"GO AWAY I CAN'T REMEMBER ANY?"

"Well what is the tide, and why do you sit on it?"

"IT'S MY JOB, IT'S WHAT I DO. I AM THE MAN WHO SITS ON THE TIDE."

Curious, Raven tried to see what he was sitting on. "Maybe if you stood on it"

"NO, I HAVE ALWAYS SAT ON THE TIDE - IT'S WHAT I DO!"

"Come on, get up."

"GO AWAY, YOU BOTHER ME."

Raven began circling him. Raven spotted an exposed portion of his "backside" and got an idea. Flying up high in the sky, he pointed his sharp beak right at it and dropped like hawk, jabbing the giant real good. With a mighty roar, the giant rose up and started howling in pain, jumping around and holding his "backside". But his wail was drown out by the sound of a hundred waterfalls, as the sea poured into a large hole where he had sat. The giant danced around in pain. The sea was almost all gone, leaving sand and floundering fish as far as the eye could see. Finally, rubbing the "tender spot" the giant sat down. As he did the sea spurted up and refilled to its former water line.

Raven knew the giant's secret. "So that's what the tide is, now if we can just teach him some new habits."

Raven perched on his shoulder and with his most persuasive trickster voice suggested: "From now on, how about taking a little stretch twice a day - just a short one, so the people can gather food from the sea."

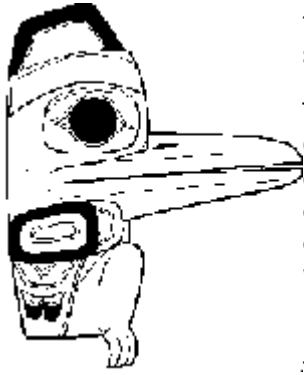
"NO, SITTING IS WHAT I DO, I AM THE MAN WHO SITS ON THE TIDE. I HAVE ALWAYS DONE THIS AND ALWAYS WILL. IT'S MY JOB."

"Come on, everybody needs a break now and then, just a short stretch twice a day?"

"GO AWAY, YOU'RE UPSETTING ME."

"I know, it's my job. It's what I do. I am the Raven. I upset things. I upset the darkness when I stole the sun and put it in the sky. I upset the cold when I stole fire from Owl and gave it to the people, and now I will upset you twice a day."

As Raven began circling for another jab, the giant roared "WHY I CAN SWAT YOU LIKE A MOSQUITO! YOU ARE NO BIGGER TO ME THAN A MINNOW TO A WHALE." He began to swing his arms wildly at the circling Raven. Giant waves were formed. As the two struggled, Raven trying to jab the giant, the giant trying to crush the Raven, a great storm struck the shores, and



they say that this was when Mountain Goat first tasted salt and why sea shells are found in the mountains.

Trying as hard as he could Raven could not get near a tender spot on the Giant. Then Raven remembered Fog Man's hat. Raven pulled the hat down on his head. Fog began pouring out, thicker and thicker. A fog bank enveloped the Giant. He looked around, trying to spot Raven, but all he could see was Fog. Then, "YEOWWW!" Raven jabbed him good. For a little while, he jumped and danced around, then settled back on his spot.

Meanwhile as the waters receded, Raven was able to gather food from the sea shore. The waters were shallow enough to fish, and there were oysters and clams and mussels and crabs. The Sandpipers and gulls and cormorants found plenty to eat. Then as the giant had settled down, the waters returned to their former level. Raven began to visit the giant twice a day at different times to catch him by surprise, upsetting him each time. Sometimes he used Fog Man's hat, or came in the dark of the moon. And as the tide went out and came in, there was plenty of food to eat.

Finally, one day, as the Raven was about to pull on the fog man's hat, he saw a surprising sight. All by himself, without Raven's reminder, the Giant stood up, stretched, looked around and after a bit, sat down. Raven was puzzled. He disguised himself as a sea bird and flew to the giant's shoulder. "Why did you just stand up and sit down?"
"IT'S MY JOB. IT'S WHAT I DO. AS LONG AS I REMEMBER IT'S WHAT I HAVE DONE. I AM THE MAN WHO MAKES THE TIDE GO OUT AND COME IN."

And as Raven flew off, relieved he would have to upset the Giant no longer, he laughed. "I am the Raven. I upset things. It's my job. It's what I do!"

About the Raven Tales

There are many tales about Raven told among the first nations of the Pacific Northwest - in particular in collections of Tlingit, Salish and Haida stories. I have found this story in several collections of Raven tales: **Sketco the Raven** by Robert Ayre and **Raven the Trickster** by Gail Robinson. A similar tale is found in the more traditional Raven Cycle: "*Raven and the Tide Woman*" in **Raven** by Dale De Armond. The Fog Hat appears in that same collection in the possession of Petrel: "*Raven and the Fog Hat*".

My First Telling

I first told the Story of Raven and the Man Who Sits on the Tides it at the campground at Kalaloch in the [Olympic National Park](#). What a perfect place - the sound of the breakers on the offshore sea stacks, the smell of salt and the shore in the air, surrounded by large spruce and cedar twisted by winter storms. The ranger was gracious enough to let me tell it at the evening campfire program. I used a "raven" cap I made and a silver mylar rain hat for the Fog Man's hat. I have told this tale many times, but that first telling is always in my mind and heart as I tell it.

My Raven Programs

I have put together a program of Raven tales I tell in front of a 9'x7' [Raven Story Screen](#). I have told for elementary and middle school classes and public libraries - and I use the stories to teach of how the first peoples on the wild pacific shores adapted to life in the Pacific Northwest. Other

Raven Tales I tell include: *Raven and the First Men*; *How Raven stole the Sun*; *Raven gets Fire*; *Raven brings the Salmon* (my version includes *Raven tricks Grizzly*); and *Raven and Gull*; and *Raven and Frog*. I have collected many other tales as well including some about Mouse Woman, the fairy Godmother of Pacific Northwest lore.

Tio Conejo

Tales from Venezuela.

DR. A. ERNST, who has done so much to increase our knowledge of Venezuelan ethnology, has collected a few popular tales, which are very interesting on account of their Tupi and Spanish affinities. The tales are entitled 'Tio Tigre and Tio Conejo' ('Uncle Tiger and Uncle Rabbit'), and all of them have for their subject the superiority of cunning and craft over sheer force. We give here translations of a few of these tales.

"Uncle Tiger had a field of splendid watermelons. He observed that somebody visited his field at night, and stole the melons: therefore he made a figure of a man of black wax, and placed it in the field. At night Uncle Rabbit came, and saw the figure. 'What are you doing there, you black man? Get away!' The figure did not reply. Then Uncle Rabbit went up to the black man and boxed his ears; but his right hand stuck to the wax. 'Let go my hand, or I'll box your other ear!' cried he. When he did so, his left hand also stuck to the wax. Then he knocked his head against the forehead of the figure: his head stuck to it. Then he worked with his hind-legs to get away: they also stuck to the wax, and Uncle Rabbit was caught. Early in the morning Uncle Tiger

came, and when he saw Uncle Rabbit, he cried, 'Oho! have we got the thief? Now I'll eat you!' — 'Wait a moment,' said Uncle Rabbit; 'set me free, and I will show you a pit in which two large deer have been caught. You had better eat those.' Uncle Tiger thought, 'Two large deer are better than Uncle Rabbit,' and he set him free. Uncle Rabbit led him to a deep pit, and said, 'Stoop down, and you will see the deer.' When Uncle Tiger did so. Uncle Rabbit pushed him from behind, and Uncle Tiger fell into the pit. Uncle Rabbit, however, ran away as fast as his legs would carry him."

Here is another story: "Uncle Rabbit was very sad because he was so small. He went to God, and wanted to be made taller. God said, 'I will do so, but first bring me a coral snake, a wasp swarm, and a calabash filled with women's tears.' Uncle Rabbit started on his journey, and arrived in a forest where there were many snakes. Walking along there, he said, 'I bet there is room for him, I bet there is room for him!' A coral snake heard him, and asked what his speech meant. He replied, 'The wasps say that there is not room enough for you in this calabash, and I bet that you can get in there.' — 'We will see at once who is right,' said the snake, and crawled into the calabash. When he was in it, Uncle Rabbit at once put the stopper into the opening, and thus the snake was caught. Then he went on, and said, 'I bet there is room for them, I bet there is room for them.' The wasps heard him, and asked what his speech meant. 'Oh!' said Uncle Rabbit, 'the snake says there is not room enough for your swarm in this calabash, and I bet that all of you can get in there.' — 'We will see at once who is right,' said the wasps, and crawled into the calabash. When the whole swarm was in, Uncle Rabbit put the stopper into the opening, and thus the wasps were caught. He next went to a village, and when near the huts he began to cry and lament. Then all the women gathered, and asked the cause of his grief. 'Oh!' said Uncle Rabbit, 'why should I not cry and lament? The world is going to be destroyed to-day, and all of us will perish.' When the

women heard this, they began to cry wofully, and Uncle Rabbit filled a calabash with their tears. Then he returned to God. When the latter saw the three calabashes with the snake, the wasps, and the tears, he said, ' Uncle Rabbit, you are more cunning than any one else. Why do you want to be taller ? But as you wish it, I will at least make your ears larger.' Saying so, he pulled Uncle Rabbit's ears, and since that day they have remained long."

Brer Rabbit

Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby

A Georgia Folktale

retold by

S.E. Schlosser

Well now, that rascal Brer Fox hated Brer Rabbit on account of he was always cutting capers and bossing everyone around. So Brer Fox decided to capture and kill Brer Rabbit if it was the last thing he ever did! He thought and he thought until he came up with a plan. He would make a tar baby! Brer Fox went and got some tar and he mixed it with some turpentine and he sculpted it into the figure of a cute little baby. Then he stuck a hat on the Tar Baby and sat her in the middle of the road.

Brer Fox hid himself in the bushes near the road and he waited and waited for Brer Rabbit to come along. At long last, he heard someone whistling and chuckling to himself, and he knew that Brer Rabbit was coming up over the hill. As he reached the top, Brer Rabbit spotted the cute little Tar Baby. Brer Rabbit was surprised. He stopped and stared at this strange creature. He had never seen anything like it before!

"Good Morning," said Brer Rabbit, doffing his hat. "Nice weather we're having."

The Tar Baby said nothing. Brer Fox laid low and grinned an evil grin.

Brer Rabbit tried again. "And how are you feeling this fine day?"

The Tar Baby, she said nothing. Brer Fox grinned an evil grin and lay low in the bushes.

Brer Rabbit frowned. This strange creature was not very polite. It was beginning to make him mad.

"Ahem!" said Brer Rabbit loudly, wondering if the Tar Baby were deaf. "I said 'HOW ARE YOU THIS MORNING?'"

The Tar Baby said nothing. Brer Fox curled up into a ball to hide his laughter. His plan was working perfectly!

"Are you deaf or just rude?" demanded Brer Rabbit, losing his temper. "I can't stand folks that are stuck up! You take off that hat and say 'Howdy-do' or I'm going to give you such a lickin'!"

The Tar Baby just sat in the middle of the road looking as cute as a button and saying nothing at all. Brer Fox rolled over and over under the bushes, fit to bust because he didn't dare laugh out loud.

"I'll learn ya!" Brer Rabbit yelled. He took a swing at the cute little Tar Baby and his paw got stuck in the tar.

"Lemme go or I'll hit you again," shouted Brer Rabbit. The Tar Baby, she said nothing.

"Fine! Be that way," said Brer Rabbit, swinging at the Tar Baby with his free paw. Now both his paws were stuck in the tar, and Brer Fox danced with glee behind the bushes.

"I'm gonna kick the stuffin' out of you," Brer Rabbit said and pounced on the Tar Baby with both feet. They sank deep into the Tar Baby. Brer Rabbit was so furious he head-butted the cute little creature until he was completely covered with tar and unable to move.

Brer Fox leapt out of the bushes and strolled over to Brer Rabbit. "Well, well, what have we here?" he asked, grinning an evil grin.

Brer Rabbit gulped. He was stuck fast. He did some fast thinking while Brer Fox rolled about on the road, laughing himself sick over Brer Rabbit's dilemma.

"I've got you this time, Brer Rabbit," said Brer Fox, jumping up and shaking off the dust. "You've sassed me for the very last time. Now I wonder what I should do with you?"

Brer Rabbit's eyes got very large. "Oh please Brer Fox, whatever you do, please don't throw me into the briar patch."

"Maybe I should roast you over a fire and eat you," mused Brer Fox. "No, that's too much trouble. Maybe I'll hang you instead."

"Roast me! Hang me! Do whatever you please," said Brer Rabbit. "Only please, Brer Fox, please don't throw me into the briar patch."

"If I'm going to hang you, I'll need some string," said Brer Fox. "And I don't have any string handy. But the stream's not far away, so maybe I'll drown you instead."

"Drown me! Roast me! Hang me! Do whatever you please," said Brer Rabbit. "Only please, Brer Fox, please don't throw me into the briar patch."

"The briar patch, eh?" said Brer Fox. "What a wonderful idea! You'll be torn into little pieces!"

Grabbing up the tar-covered rabbit, Brer Fox swung him around and around and then flung him head over heels into the briar patch. Brer Rabbit let out such a scream as he fell that all of Brer Fox's fur stood straight up. Brer Rabbit fell into the briar bushes with a crash and a mighty thump. Then there was silence.

Brer Fox cocked one ear toward the briar patch, listening for whimpers of pain. But he heard nothing. Brer Fox cocked the other ear toward the briar patch, listening for Brer Rabbit's death rattle. He heard nothing.

Then Brer Fox heard someone calling his name. He turned around and looked up the hill. Brer Rabbit was sitting on a log combing the tar out of his fur with a wood chip and looking smug.

"I was bred and born in the briar patch, Brer Fox," he called. "Born and bred in the briar patch."

And Brer Rabbit skipped away as merry as a cricket while Brer Fox ground his teeth in rage and went home.

How Kwaku Ananse Gained a Kingdom of Knowledge from a Kernel of Corn

We go back to West Africa (Ghana in fact) for an Ashanti story about **Ananse** the spider. This popular and well known African character here finds himself in a sticky situation. The mean and powerful sky god **Nyame** has charged **Ananse** with the task of bringing the entire Kingdom from Beyond the River (every man, woman and child) before **Nyame** to pray. The only tool **Ananse** is given to complete the challenge is a small grain of corn. **Ananse** moves from village to village tricking the chiefs in a game of exchanges until eventually he succeeds. This is really a story about how **Ananse** gains his knowledge and becomes the trickster character he is famous for being. It is also a story about how having faith and believing in one's self is paramount in any successful endeavor.



In Ashanti, as in much of Ghana, the village is a social as well as an economic heart of society. Everyone is expected to participate in the major ceremonies. The most popular ceremonies are funeral celebrations which typically last several days. The extended family - no matter where they live - will travel home to attend a funeral.

The traditional priest and the herbalist provide a medical service which can be partly paid for in local produce (a hen, eggs etc.) as opposed to Western medicine which requires cash payment, and usually a considerable journey to the nearest hospital. The priest, when possessed by the gods, is particularly powerful at dealing with spiritual problems. The herbalist relies on local medicines to affect a cure. Many of these cures are now being investigated by research institutes both in Ghana and elsewhere as alternative remedies for many ailments, including Malaria.

ACTIVITIES

Story Review

Review with your class the stories from the performance by asking these questions.

Storytelling Festival

This activity encourages students to explore the native cultures of Latin America, to learn some aspects of oral storytelling, and to share their knowledge with others.

WHAT YOU NEED

Examples of legends or folktales from the cultures and peoples of Latin America (such as the stories in this BOXTALES performance.)

WHAT TO DO

1. Introduce students to legends and folktales of Latin American cultures by reading one to the class (or referring the BOXTALES performance.) If possible, choose a story that explains some aspect of the culture, such as the origin of a custom, or of the environment, like the existence of a mountain range.
2. Explain that many of these stories were created by storytellers, who passed them on to others orally, not in writing. Only later were they written down. Tell students that they are going to become oral storytellers themselves. They will choose a story to learn and then present the story as part of a storytelling festival.
3. Divide students into storytelling teams or, if you prefer, have them form their own groups. Give

students time to do research and to choose a story. Tell students that their story should say something important about the culture from which it comes. Remind students that their stories will be performed and that they might want to choose a story that lends itself to a dramatic reading or presentation. (Note: You might want to review the groups' choices.)

4. The group should study the story and make a plan for how they would like to perform, or "tell," it. For example, students may want to assign different parts of the story to each group member or have one group member act out a part or play an instrument, etc. The group should know the beginning, middle, and end of its story.
5. Encourage students to be creative about their presentations. Some students may want to add music and props, some may be able to incorporate costumes or rhythmic movements.
6. Allow enough rehearsal time for each group. Hold the first performances in the classroom. Then discuss with students how to share the storytelling with other classes, or with family and community members.

TEACHING OPTIONS

Tape the presentations and make them available in the school library. You might also share the tape with a class in another community that is studying the same, or a related, theme.

If student enthusiasm stays high, suggest that students share their stories with the community by presenting it at local nursing home, hospital, or the like.

Encourage students to think of a landform or custom in their region and to write a "folktale" about it.

A Message in a Bottle

In this activity, students will create an imaginary tale of travel and adventure.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Maps of Pacific Northwest, South America
- Plastic bottles with caps (one for each child writing a tale)
- A water table, fish tank, or large basin (optional)

WHAT TO DO

1. Tell children that they are going to write a tale about an imaginary adventure or trip that has left them stranded on a desert island. Explain that the only chance for rescue is to write a message, put it in a bottle, and put the bottle in the water, with the hope that someone will find it.
2. Brainstorm with children the kind of information they should include in their tales. For example, they might want to explain who they are, where they were going when they got stranded, where they left from, and how they were traveling. They should also include information about where they are, such as the climate, what the island is like, what plants and

- animals they have seen, and how they are surviving. Record their suggestions on the board or chart paper.
3. When children are ready to begin writing, make maps and/or atlases available to them. They can refer to the maps if they need help planning their trips or spelling the names of places they might want to include in their tales.
 4. When students have finished their tales, have them place the tales in the bottles and set the bottles afloat in the water table (or whatever container of water you have available).
 5. Then have students fish the bottles (not their own) out of the water, and read aloud the tales within. After reading each tale, they can "rescue" the author by using maps and story details to find approximately where he or she is stranded.

TEACHING OPTIONS

- Refer to the BOXTALES performance of LEYENDAS DE DUENDE. Have your class write about being stranded on desert islands off the coasts Mexico, South America and the Caribbean. You may want to arrange with a teacher of another class to have your tales sent there. Then the students in that class can try to locate the writer of each tale. Your class could do the same with tales from the students in the other class.

Bibliography and Further Reading

HOW ANANSE GAINED A KINGDOM OF KNOWLEDGE FROM A GRAIN OF CORN

Ananse the Spider: Tales from an Ashanti Village, Peggy Appiah, Pantheon Books, 1969

Asian-Pacific Folktales and Legends- edited by Jeannette Faurot,
A Touchtone Book- Simon and Shuster, New York 1995 *other*

In the Beginning *Creation Stories From Around the World-* Edith Hamilton, Harcourt Brace Jovonovich Publishers, New York 1988

Song of the Sea *Myths, Tales and Folklore-* Ann Spencer, Tundra Books, Toronto 2001
Sealskin Soulskin, general research

The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus

By Joel Chandler Harris

BOXTALES Theatre Company Program Evaluation

Name of Performance: _____ Date: _____

School Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Evaluator (please circle one): Teacher Administrator Specialist Staff Volunteer
Student

<u>Program Content/Delivery</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
<u>The Artists</u>				
Artists' verbal presentation and communication skills	1	2	3	4
Quality of artistic skill	1	2	3	4
<u>The Program</u>				
Organization and pace	1	2	3	4
The story was interesting	1	2	3	4
Creativity of presentation	1	2	3	4
Appropriate content for grade level	1	2	3	4
Length of program	1	2	3	4
Effectiveness in teaching educational concepts	1	2	3	4
Quality of printed teacher guide (if applicable)	1	2	3	4
<u>Students' Response</u>				
Students' attention to program	1	2	3	4
Rapport between performers and audience	1	2	3	4
Students' level of understanding of the story and characters	1	2	3	4

Would you recommend Boxtales Theatre Company to another school? Yes No

Please describe the impact of this program on yourself and/or your students. Was there any aspect of the program that inspired you as a teacher? Please feel free to share additional comments or suggestions for improvement. Use the back of this paper as needed.