

Storytelling

Legends

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**Unit Goal:**

**Students will better understand and participate in a Native American traditional learning experience--storytelling.**

This unit works well in **grades 3-5**, but can be modified and adjusted to work with **K-2**.

Use one short legend and use language experience for writing process. Use a chart with picture of steps. Young students will tell one legend together as a class.

This unit takes about 3 weeks to complete. The work sessions last about 45-60 minutes. Be proactive learn as much as possible about traditional Native American learning. This unit uses Blackfoot legends, but any Native stories could be used.

**Supplies**

**a storyteller**

**legends/stories**

**large index cards**

**brown paper grocery bags cut to 18x11”(8 for each legend)**

**old crayons (thick work best)**

**paraffin wax**

**old or craft irons**

**newspaper**

Preplan to have and Native American storytelling come into your classroom.

**Remember to approach the guest storytelling with a small token of goodwill, and to exchange something for the time they spend in your classroom.** If a storytelling is not available, the teacher can learn to tell a legend or story.

**Day 1**

**Objective: Students will better understand a storyteller's place in traditional Native American learning.**

**Anticipatory set:** Have students close their eyes and think about a time when they were very little and learned something new. Ask them who taught them this and how they learned it. Then ask them to discuss this with a neighbor. Have a few students

share. Then ask them to close their eyes and think about something new they learned last year. Ask how they learned it and who taught it to them. Tell them to share with a neighbor and choose a few students to share with the whole group.

Discuss traditional Native American learning: no classroom--storytelling, everyday experience, chores, play, etc.

Now begin to talk about the differences and similarities with their learning today and traditional Native American learning.

Introduce storyteller or teacher tells a story.

## Day 2

**Objectives: Students will experience Native American Legends in groups.**

**Anticipatory set:** Have student think about and discuss with a neighbor what they thought of the storyteller and how they felt about their learning through the story.

Have a number of Blackfoot Legends (or any tribal legends/stories) available. Make sure that these are in print form--not book form. Students will be creating pictures in their own heads as they read the legend, and should not copy or simulate another illustrator's work. It is interesting after they finish the unit to give them the book form (if available) and let them see the differences and similarities. This unit has attached copies of stories that were taken off the internet at this site:

**<http://www.idigenouspeople.org/natlit/napi.htm>**

There are many sites out there that have Native American story--choose with care. Students may even go "surfing" and find the legend/story their group wants to use.

Choose groups. This unit works well with 3-4 students in each group, as it is too much work for 2 students to complete in the time given. **Students will stay in this group through the entire unit.**

Students will in groups read the legends available with the idea that they will choose a legend to tell themselves. Groups will choose their favorite and tell the class why they want to tell this legend. If more than one group chooses the same legend, the group with the best reason will get to use the story. The other group will have to choose another one.

Make a large chart on tag board that will help keep groups organized, on task and on time. Students will check off each part of the unit when they have completed it. An example of this chart is attached.

## Day 3

**Objective: Students will understand how people become storyteller.**

**Anticipatory Set:** Discuss how storyteller learned to tell their stories. Work students through how they will learn their legend so they can do a group telling.

Tell students they will be retelling a Native American legend using illustration they will create. Show students an example of a Tapa Cloth.

The following are directions for teacher to create a Tapa Cloth:

1. Cut paper bag into desired size.
2. Create an illustration using pencil.
3. Color illustration--press very hard--thick crayons work best.
4. Cover any part of bag not colored with paraffin wax. The wax helps make the bag soft.
5. Crumple illustration into small ball and then smooth illustration out. Do this many times--the more it is crumpled and smoothed--the softer it will become.
6. Iron illustration between two pieces of newspaper.
7. Use a thin black marker to outline as desired.

Introduce chart (see attached chart). This will walk students through the process that will help them end up with an oral story to present to others. The 1st step has already been completed, so groups will be able to check it off today. Groups will check off each step as they complete it. The following explains the chart:

### **Steps**

**Read legend aloud in group. Chose a legend and tell the class why it was chosen**

**Divide legend into 8 logical pieces.**

**Write a synopsis of each of the 8 pieces on index card(s). Use your own words, as this will be an insurance policy when group member get up to tell legend. It will be staples to back of illustration in case a group member forget their part.**

**Read each of the 8 pieces in order to class. If they think it is o.k. go to next step. If it does not make sense to class rework and try again.**

**Group does not leave this step until the class approves of their efforts.**

**----Now there will be one check in each box for each illustration as it is completed-----**

**Illustrate each of the 8 pieces on a precut grocery bag. Very important--use only pencil for this part of illustration! Each person in the group does their own piece. This illustration should match their synopsis.**

**Each person checks their illustration with their group. They must read their synopsis and group will make sure that the synopsis matches the illustration. Group must start with what they like about the illustration being presented and move to suggestions for improvement. Illustration is not complete until everyone in the group agrees it is.**

**Take this (group approved) complete pencil illustration and color it. It can only be colored with crayon, as crayon will help the bag become soft. Important--color hard and have a thick layer of crayon. Crayon will fall off as bag is tanned.**

**Any area not colored (the more color the better) should be rubbed with paraffin wax.**

**This is the hard part. Crumple completed, colored illustration into a ball, and then smooth illustration out. Do this many times--the more it is crumpled and smoothed--the softer it will become. Do this until it is very, very soft.**

**Iron illustration between two pieces of newspaper.**

**Use a thick black marker to outline as desired.**

**Staple insurance policy (written synopsis) to back of illustration.**

**----Students will continue through the above steps until all illustration are done----**

**Each group member will practice all their pieces until they can be told without looking at synopsis.**

**Practice storytelling as a group until it can be told orally without any mistakes.**

**Present story to the class. Class will begin with what they liked about the storytelling and move to what could be improved. If class feels that the storyteller are ready for an audience group will move to next step. If not then the group improves storytelling and tries in front of class again.**

**Group will schedule when they will go to another class to share their storytelling skills.**

**Day 4**

**Objective: Students will discuss logical parts their legend can be separated into to complete group telling.**

**Anticipatory set:** Have students think about how the storyteller told the story in sequence or order and where the story had natural breaks.

Ask students how a their group will find breaks in their legends. Remind them that they will need to illustrate each piece. Have them discuss this in their groups--let them have some discovery time. Have each group share what they came up with. Each group should make a plan and divide the printed story into 8 logical pieces. Have them write directly on the copy. Groups will hand in copies of legend that have been divided and the teacher will look them over. Students may not put a check that this is completed until teacher has given approval.

### Day 5

**Objective: Students will learn what a synopsis is and how it used.**

**Anticipatory set:** Ask students to think about how they would tell a friend about a new, cool movie they saw. Would they tell every piece and take two hours to retell it. Choose a few students to share how they would tell. Let them know this is a synopsis or a short version of what happened.

Discuss with students that they will be using a synopsis to retell their pieces of the legend. Take one piece of one group's legend and have a group member read it out loud to class. Have students help teacher create a synopsis on the board. After this model have students work in groups and divide the 8 logical pieces of legend up in group. If four member it works out to two pieces each. Students should complete a synopsis for each of their pieces. As these are complete the group should read them in sequence and make sure transition makes sense. **Then groups will read each of the 8 pieces in order to class. If class thinks they story makes sense, then the group will go to next step on the chart. If it does not make sense to class the group will have to rework and try again. Group does not leave this step until the class approves of their efforts.**

### 2nd and 3rd Weeks

**Objective: Students will learn to work in a cooperative group to produce an end result.**

**Anticipatory set:** Ask each group to report everyday on their progress.

At this point groups will be all over the chart as they will move at different paces. It all works out, because the groups that are ready to storytell first will get the most opportunity to present. Have them schedule their storytelling at the same time the rest of the class is continuing to work.

Instruct students to take their pieces and work on them one at a time all the way through the next 7 steps of the chart.

**Teacher should now take time to work with groups as they move through the chart that are struggling and model what need to be done. Give mini-lesson in these two weeks as needed.**