

**Teacher's Guide
for
Folklore and Mythology**

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“The Crow and the Pitcher,” “Wind and Sun,” “Two Frogs,” and “The Tailor” (see below for Lynn’s versions of these stories) are examples of folk tales that you can use in the classroom. They are all very simple to learn, they’re entertaining, and yet they are appropriate for character development. Other stories can be found in the books in the attached bibliography, particularly **Wisdom Tales** by Forest, **Trickster Tales** by Sherman, and **How and Why Stories** by Hamilton. Here are a few of the things you can do with these stories and others you find that appeal to you.

1. Tell one of these folk tales to the class. Then have the students alternate retelling the same story to a partner. This way everyone gets a chance to feel what it’s like to tell a story without the pressure of telling in front of the entire class.
2. Explore ways to make the stories fit in contemporary life. Have the students brainstorm what could be substituted for the tailor making a coat in the story, “The Tailor.” For instance, it could be a person sewing clothes that become a quilt, that becomes a tablecloth that becomes a place mat. Or it could be a carpenter building a house that becomes a piece of furniture that becomes a book end. Then have students retell the story with their changes.
3. Stories lend themselves easily to theater. Students can turn any of these stories into skits, spending time thinking about dialogue. The frogs in “Two Frogs” have very different outlooks on life. How could you show that in their dialogue, perhaps as they hop around the farm at the beginning of the story before finding the bucket? Would the two frogs, move differently?
4. Folklore is full of symbols. Have your students explore some stories to find these symbols and compare how they are used in the different tales. For instance, woods (at least in European and American stories) usually represent some kind of a difficulty or challenge, whereas light is a power that can represent joy or truth or even life. Why are there so many sets of threes in folklore—three pigs, three brothers, three trials?
5. As a class, begin a story using one or more of these symbols. Have the class choose the main character, where the story takes place, and what problem does the hero or heroine have? Then let pairs of students complete the story by telling it to each other. After they’ve worked out the details, they can write down their story.

The Crow and the Pitcher

Aesop's Fable, Adapted by Lynn Ruehlmann

There once was a crow who found himself in the middle of a drought. He had looked and looked but couldn't find any water.

He said, "Awk! Poor, poor me! I'm going to die of thirst!" He moaned and whined until all at once he said, "Oh, Crow, pull yourself together. You can find water if you don't give up!"

And he flew up to a tree to look around again.

Sure enough, he spotted a pitcher he hadn't noticed before. When he flew over to look into it, he discovered there was water in the pitcher.

"Ah ha! I knew it," he gloated.

Standing on the edge of the pitcher, he leaned in to get a drink.

He couldn't reach the water. The pitcher was narrow and deep and the water was so shallow he could not touch it.

"Awk! I knew it! I'm going to die of thirst!" he squawked.

After awhile, he sighed and said, "Oh, Crow, pull yourself together. You can find water if you don't give up."

And he thought and thought until at last he came up with a plan. "I will knock the pitcher over, and then I'll be able to reach the water!" So he flew off to the side and then flew back at the pitcher and whacked it with his shoulder. But the pitcher was so heavy, it didn't fall over. Then he tried to peck a hole in the side of the pitcher. But the walls of the pitcher were so thick, he couldn't get through them.

Crow moaned, "I knew it. I'm going to die of thirst!" But then he grew bored with feeling sorry for himself.

He said, "Pull yourself together, Crow. You can find water if you don't give up."

He began to look around. He looked and looked, but the only thing of any interest that he could find was a pile of pebbles. He thought and thought till he came up with an idea.

He flew over to the pebbles, picked one up and took it back and dropped it into the pitcher. He went back and got another pebble and dropped it into the pitcher. Then another and another, till at last he'd used up all the pebbles.

Then very timidly he peered into the pitcher. His plan had worked! The pebbles had filled up the pitcher, and the water had risen above the pebbles. Now when Crow stood on the lip of the pitcher and reached in, he could get himself a good long drink of water! And that is why Crow did not die of thirst because he did not give up!

Wind and Sun

Aesop's Fable, Adapted by Lynn Ruehlmann

One day Wind and Sun were having an argument.

"I'm stronger than you are!" said Wind.

"No, I'm stronger than you!" said Sun.

"Nah huh," said Wind, "I'm stronger!"

"Nah huh," said Sun, "I'm stronger!"

"I'm stronger!"

"No, I'm stronger!"

"I am!"

"I am!"

This went on and on and on until finally Wind and Sun got tired of saying the same thing over and over and over. They decided they needed a contest to prove which of them was really stronger. They looked around and what should they see but a little girl walking down the road, minding her own business, picking flowers.

Sun and Wind looked at each other.

"There's our contest!" they agreed.

The one who could get the jacket off the little girl would be declared the strongest.

"Me first!" yelled Wind, and he started to blow and blow.

The jacket didn't come off.

Wind blew harder and harder.

The little girl got cold and pulled the jacket tighter around herself!

The Wind blew and blew and blew as hard as he could, but he could not get that jacket off the girl.

Finally Sun said, "My turn!"

Sun spread out his golden rays and shone down on the earth. It got warmer and warmer, till the little girl unbuttoned her jacket . . . and took it off!

And that is how Wind and Sun decided that Sun was stronger than blustery Wind.

Two Frogs

Russian Folktale, Adapted by Lynn Ruehlmann

Once there were two frogs that lived in a pond on a farm. One day the two friends went out hopping and exploring around the farmhouse and discovered a bucket. They wondered what might be in it, so up they hopped onto the edge, where they saw it was a bucket of cream. The two frogs teetered back and forth on the rim and fell in.

They kicked and thrashed and tried to jump out, but the cream was too shallow in the bucket and they couldn't jump out. The sides were too slick and steep to climb. So the two frogs were stuck inside the bucket. They both continued kicking and splashing for awhile till the first frog said, "Oh, it's no use. It doesn't matter how hard or long we kick, we're just going to drown anyway." So he stopped kicking and sank to the bottom.

The other frog kept on kicking and kicking all that night. As dawn rose, he noticed something very odd. His legs weren't splashing around in liquid the way they had been. Instead, his feet were gripping against something slippery but solid. He gave one more gigantic kick, and he leapt out of the bucket and away back to his pond.

Later that morning, the farmer came to pick up his bucket of cream. At the bottom of the bucket there was one dead frog, which he tossed into the woods. The cream was no longer cream, but had been churned into butter.

The Tailor

Folktale, Adapted by Lynn Ruehlmann

There once was a tailor who made fine clothes for everyone around. He made them so well and he made them so inexpensively that people kept him busy as much as he could work.

One day his wife said, "You know, for a tailor, your own clothes are pretty ragged! You really ought to make yourself a new coat."

So the next time the tailor bought fabric, he chose some for himself, and he began to fashion a coat for himself. When it was done, he was so pleased, he wore it every day. The years went on till one day his wife said, "You know, for a tailor, your coat is pretty ragged. I'm going to get rid of it."

"Oh, no!" said the tailor, "I'm sure I can fix it." So he looked over his ragged coat and decided that there was just enough good material left in it to cut it down and make himself a jacket, which he did, and he wore it happily.

The years went by till one day his wife said, "You know, for a tailor, your jacket is pretty ragged. Your brother's coming to visit. You don't want to greet him wearing such a shabby jacket!"

So the tailor inspected the jacket—by now a favorite of his—and decided there was just enough good fabric left on it to make a vest, which he did, and it served him well for several more years, till his wife said, "You know, for a tailor, your vest is pretty ragged. Time to get rid of it."

The tailor looked and thought and decided there was just enough good fabric to make a hat, which he did. And he wore it and enjoyed it for a long time, till his wife said, "You know, for a tailor, your hat is pretty ragged. What are you going to do about it?" Once again he inspected the fabric and decided this time there was just enough to make a button, which he did. And he wore that button for a long, long time, till even he could see that the fabric had worn off the button and there was nothing left.

Nothing left, that is, except just enough to tell a story, which he did. And now I have just told it to you!

Bibliography

These are some books to consult if you are interested in exploring the use of storytelling in the classroom.

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About Storyteller Lynn Ruehlmann

Lynn has been a professional storyteller since 1990. She has taught storytelling at Old Dominion University, won a Folio Award for Best Actress in a Comedy, and Artist of the Year from Young Audiences of Virginia.

Her recording of "Spy! The Story of Civil War Spy Elizabeth Van Lew" won two national awards.

EVALUATION FOR PROGRAM BY
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Thanks so much for your help!

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What program or workshop did you attend?

What did you or your students like best about the program and/or workshop? Why?

Was there anything you or your students would have wanted changed?

Are there any particular stories or kinds of stories that you would like to hear in the future?

What material or skills would you like covered in the future in a workshop?

Do you have any other comments?

Optional signature

Thank you again for your help and opinions. They are so important and appreciated!