

COMMON CORE CURRICULUM MAPS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS


[Home](#) | [FAQs](#) | [About the Project](#) | [News](#) | [Contact](#)


[Grade 6](#) ▶ [Unit 2](#)
[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Folklore: A Blast from the Past

This six-week unit focuses on what folklore (myths, legends, and tall and pourquoi tales) reveal about world cultures—including our own.

OVERVIEW

[Show All](#) | [Hide All](#) | [Top](#)

Students can choose myths and legends from a variety of sources: the ancient Greek or Roman civilizations; Russian society; Viking, Eskimo, or Latin American cultures; or other cultures of the students' choice. In addition, students read informational text, listen to music, and examine art from the myth's or legend's country of origin. Class discussions should focus on the fact that folklore provides a limited view of a culture, that it's important to research and find out more about the country before making sweeping generalizations about it. The goal of this unit is not only for students to find commonalities across this genre, but to discover countries and cultures other than our own. The culminating project is an open-ended reflective essay response to the essential question.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

? How is folklore simultaneously revealing and limiting?

[Standards Checklist](#)

FOCUS STANDARDS

[Show All](#) | [Hide All](#) | [Top](#)

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- **RL.6.3:** Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- **RI.6.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
- **W.6.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- **W.6.7:** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.
- **SL.6.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.6.1 (c):** Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.
- **SL.6.1 (d):** Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.
- **L.6.4:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 6 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- **L.6.4 (a):** Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- **L.6.4 (b):** Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., *audience*, *auditory*, *audible*).

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](#) (1.5 MB)

SUGGESTED STUDENT OBJECTIVES

Show All | Hide All | Top

- Read, compare, and contrast myths, legends, and tall and pourquoi tales from a variety of countries/cultures.
- Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another.
- Write a variety of responses to literature and informational text.
- Write a narrative (myth, legend, tall tale, or pourquoi tale).
- Compare and contrast the reading a story, such as *Just So Stories*, to its audio version.
- Perform a scene from a myth or legend for classmates.
- Conduct research on a country of choice, and integrate that knowledge with folklore from the same country.
- Participate in group discussions.

SUGGESTED WORKS

Show All | Hide All | Top

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

LITERARY TEXTS

Stories

Greece/Ancient World

- *Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the 'Iliad'* (Rosemary Sutcliff) (E)
- *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths* (Bernard Evslin)
- *The Lightning Thief: Percy Jackson and the Olympians: Book 1* (Rick Riordan)
- *Women Warriors: Myths and Legends of Heroic Women* (Marianna Mayer and Heller Julek)

Rome

- *Roman Myths* (Geraldine McCaughrean and Emma Chichester Clark)

Vikings

- *D'Aulaires' Book of Norse Myths* (Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire)

Inuit-Eskimo

- *Tikta'Liktak: An Inuit-Eskimo Legend* (James A. Houston)

Latin America

- *Golden Tales: Myths, Legends, and Folktales from Latin America* (Lulu Delacre) (Note: This title also includes informational text.)

General

- *Favorite Folktales from Around the World* (Jane Yolen)
- *The Firebird and Other Russian Fairy Tales* (Arthur Ransome)
- *Just So Stories* (Rudyard Kipling) (EA)
- *Cut from the Same Cloth: American Women of Myth, Legend, and Tall Tale* (Robert D. San Souci, Brian Pinkney, and Jane Yolen)
- *American Tall Tales* (Mary Pope Osborne and Michael McCurdy) (EA)

Poems

- "Twelfth Song of Thunder" (Navajo, Traditional) (E)

Audiobooks

- *Just So Stories* (Rudyard Kipling) (Harper Collins)
- *The Lightning Thief: Percy Jackson and the Olympians: Book 1* (Rick Riordan and Jesse Bernstein) (Listening Library)

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Informational Text

Ancient World

- *The Usborne Internet-Linked Encyclopedia of World History* (Jane Bingham)

Greece

- *The Hero Schliemann: The Dreamer Who Dug For Troy* (Laura Amy Schlitz and Robert Byrd)

- *Greeks Internet Linked* (Illustrated World History) (Susan Peach, Anne Millard, and Ian Jackson)
- *You Wouldn't Want to be a Slave in Ancient Greece!: A Life You'd Rather Not Have* (You Wouldn't Want To... Series)(Fiona MacDonald, David Salariya, and David Antram)

Rome

- *Romans: Internet Linked* (Illustrated World History) (Anthony Marks)
- *You Wouldn't Want to Live in Pompeii! A Volcanic Eruption You'd Rather Avoid* (You Wouldn't Want To...Series) (John Malam, David Salariya, and David Antram)
- *You Wouldn't Want to be a Roman Soldier!: Barbarians You'd Rather Not Meet* (You Wouldn't Want To...Series) (David Stewart and David Antram)

Vikings

- *First Facts about the Vikings* (Jacqueline Morley)
- *Vicious Vikings* (Horrible Histories TV Tie-in) (Terry Deary and Martin Brown)
- *You Wouldn't Want to Be a Viking Explorer!: Voyages You'd Rather Not Make* (You Wouldn't Want To...Series) (Andrew Langley, David Salariya, and David Antram)

Inuit-Eskimo

- *The Inuit* (Watts Library) (Suzanne M. Williams)
- *Building an Igloo* (Ulli Steltzer)

Latin America

- *Golden Tales: Myths, Legends, and Folktales from Latin America* (Lulu Delacre) (Note: This title also includes folktales.)
- *Aztec, Inca, and Maya* (DK Eyewitness Books) (Elizabeth Baquedano and Barry Clarke)
- *Beneath the Stone: A Mexican Zapotec Tale* (Bernard Wolf)
- *The History Atlas of South America* (MacMillan Continental History Atlases) (Edwin Early, ed.)
- *First Americans: Story of Where They Came From and Who They Became* (Anthony F. Aveni and S.D. Nelson)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

[Show All](#) | [Hide All](#) | [Top](#)

Graphic Organizer

As you read a variety of myths and legends, keep track of the following information in your journal:

- Characters
- Country of origin
- Problem (that can't be solved)
- Setting
- Title
- Hero (who comes to solve the problem or explains the mystery)
- Ending
- Characteristics unique to this country's folklore

Your teacher may ask you to share your responses with a partner before class discussion. Be sure to write down the page numbers of relevant information, or mark your book with Post-It notes, so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion. (RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3)

Class Discussion

Be prepared to compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events across stories, drawing on specific information from the stories read by you and your classmates. (SL.6.1a, b, c, d, RL.6.2, RL.6.3)

Class Discussion

How does *Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the Iliad* by Rosemary Sutcliff provide insight into Greek civilization? Discuss insights into characters from this story, plot developments, and society in general. Your teacher may ask you to write your own responses in your journal and share it with a partner before class discussion. (RI.6.4, SL.6.1a, b, c, d, RL.6.1)

Informational Text Response

After reading folklore from a particular country, choose informational text about the country/culture of origin to read. What does the informational text tell you about a country/culture that folklore does not? Write your thoughts in your journal, and share your ideas with a partner. (RI.6.2, RI.6.4)

Literature Response

Outline how the plot of a myth, legend, tall tale, or pourquoi tale of choice unfolds in a series of episodes by creating a comic strip of key events. Be sure to include the characters, and how they respond or change as the plot moves towards the "happy ending." Make note of page numbers each box refers to so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion, if needed. (RL.6.3)

Class Discussion/Venn Diagram

What are the similarities and differences you notice among myths, legends, tall tales, and pourquoi tales? Your teacher may ask you to write your own responses in your journal and share it with a partner before class discussion. After class discussion, create a Venn diagram in your journal that outlines the similarities and differences among three of the types of folklore. (SL.6.1a, b, c, d, RL.6.9)

Narrative Writing

Write your own myth or legend. As discussed in class, myths and legends were written to explain their surroundings (often before scientific explanations were found). Follow the "typical" pattern (see below), but also build upon your insights from the graphic organizer in the first activity.

- Explanation of the setting
- The problem
- The failure to solve the problem
- The hero comes along
- He/she has a plan
- The solution is found
- Conclusion (usually a "happy ending") (W.6.3a, b, c, d, e, W.6.4, W.6.5, L.6.1a, b, c, d, L.6.2a, b)

Dramatization/Fluency

Choose a scene from one of the myths or legends read that you feel are the most revealing about that culture. Work with classmates to present the scene as a dramatic reading. (SL.6.6)

Art Appreciation

Find art pieces that portray the characters or culture(s) about which you read. How does knowing the "story behind the character" give you a deeper insight into the artwork? Your teacher may ask you to write your own responses in your journal and share it with a partner before class discussion. (SL.6.1a, b, c, d, RL.6.3)

Literature Response/Media Appreciation

How is listening to *Just So Stories* as an audiobook similar to/different from reading the book? Which do you prefer? Why? Your teacher may ask you to write your own responses in your journal and share it with a partner before class discussion. (RL.6.7)

Word Study

Keep an index card file of words studied while reading various myths, legends, tall tales, or pourquoi tales. Keeping the words on index cards will help you when we sort words by prefix, suffix, root words, meaning, spelling feature, etc. Did you find words you recognize that are from the country/culture of the folklore read? How can word origins, or etymology, affect our understanding of the words? (Note: This will be an ongoing activity all year long.) (L.6.4a, b, RI.6.4)

Research Report/Reflective Essay/Multimedia Presentation

Conduct research on a country from which you read folklore. How does knowing information enhance your understanding of the folklore from that country? What information did you only learn from research? Talk with a classmate to share ideas. Then, drawing on informational text as well as folklore we've read, write an essay response to the essential question ("How is folklore simultaneously revealing and limiting?"). Add examples of this in a multimedia format and present it to the class. (W.6.7, W.9a, b, W.6.4, L.6.1a, b, c, d, L.6.2a, b)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Show All](#) | [Hide All](#) | [Top](#)

Myth and Truth: The "First Thanksgiving" (ReadWriteThink) (RL.6.2)

Note: By exploring myths surrounding the Wampanoag, the pilgrims, and the "first Thanksgiving," this lesson asks students to think critically about commonly believed myths regarding the Wampanoag Indians in colonial America.

[The Big Bad Wolf: Analyzing Point of View in Texts](#) (ReadWriteThink) (RL.6.3)

Note: Many students read without questioning a text or analyzing the author's viewpoint. In this lesson, students learn to look at the author's purpose, examine multiple viewpoints, and also recognize gaps in the text.

[Plot Diagram](#) (ReadWriteThink) (RL.6.5)

Note: The Plot Diagram is an organizational tool focusing on a pyramid or triangular shape, which is used to map the events in a story. This mapping of plot structure allows readers and writers to visualize the key features of stories.

[Today is St. Patrick's Day](#) (ReadWriteThink) (RL.6.4)

Note: St. Patrick's Day is celebrated by reading Irish folk tales and using the Story Map tool to create a graphic organizer and see what characteristics are unique to Irish tales.

TERMINOLOGY

[Show All](#) | [Hide All](#) | [Top](#)

- pourquoi tale
- plot
- oral tradition
- photographic essay
- etymology

[Previous](#) | [Next](#)

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