

# **The Geography of Folk Tales Using Foreign Stories to Teach Geography**

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## Overview

The use of engaging literature is a proven method of teaching many concepts in the curriculum. Foreign stories (folk tales, legends, etc.) can be both engaging and informative of the cultures and other geographic features of various lands throughout the world.

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to give students practice in recognizing the Five Themes of Geography through the use of foreign stories.

## Connection to the Curriculum

Social Studies  
Reading  
Language Arts

## Connection to the National Geography Standards

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
3. How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.
10. The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

## Connection to the Arizona State Standards

- 3SS-F2** Identify natural and human characteristics of places and how people interact with and modify their environment, with emphasis on:
- PO1** natural characteristics of places, including land forms, bodies of water, natural resources, and weather
  - PO2** human characteristics of places, including houses, schools, neighborhoods, and communities
  - PO3** the relationship between the physical features and the location of human activities
  - PO6** the ways in which people have used and modified resources in the local region, including dams construction, building roads, building cities, and raising crops
- 3SS-E4** Demonstrate understanding of the characteristics, purposes, and use of geographic tools to locate and analyze information about people, places, and environments, with emphasis on:
- PO1** ways to display geographic information and characteristic through map, charts, and graphs

**PO4** drawing an accurate map after being given a description of a place  
**3SS-E5** Describe natural and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define regions, their relationships with other regions, and their patterns of change, with emphasis on:

**PO1** common characteristics of regions at local, national, and international scales on the basis of climate, landforms, ecosystems, and culture

**PO2** the concept of regions and how and why regions change

**PO3** relationships and interactions among regions

**R-E2** Use reading strategies such as making inferences and predictions, summarizing, paraphrasing, differentiating fact from opinion, drawing conclusions, and determining author's purpose and perspective to comprehend written selections

**PO3** summarize text in own words

**W-E3** Write a summary that presents information clearly and accurately, contains the most significant details and preserves the position of the author

**PO1** Use own words except for material quoted

**PO3** Contain main ideas of event/article/story plus most significant details

**PO4** Present clearly written and organized information

**NOTE:** Other standards may be addressed depending on the stories the teacher chooses.

#### Grade Level

This is intended for Grades 5-9, but can be easily adapted for other grade levels.

#### Time Required

Two to three class periods of 45 to 50 minutes each. (Time will vary according to reading abilities of students and stories chosen by the teacher.)

#### Materials

- Folk tales, legends, fairy tales, or myths from foreign countries (available in school and public libraries). One book for every 2 to 3 students (unless teacher chooses for students to do the project individually).
- Five Themes Question Sheet
- Examples of the Five Themes from Your Foreign Story sheet
- Poster board
- World atlas (or any other countries of the world resource)
- Drawing paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Paper and pen or computer

## Objectives

Students will:

- 1) Apply their knowledge of the Five Themes of Geography by analyzing a story from a foreign country.
- 2) Draw a map of the country from which their story originated.
- 3) Summarize the story.

## Procedures

- 1) (If necessary) review the Five Themes of Geography, listing them on the board. Students should demonstrate at least an awareness of the Five Themes.
- 2) Distribute and discuss the “Five Themes Question Sheet” with them. Explain that these Five Themes can be noticed and applied in many contexts, including children’s stories from foreign lands. As an example of this, read a brief story from a foreign country (for instance, *Strega Nona* – a story from Italy) telling the students to write examples of the Five Themes that they notice in the story. As a class, discuss the themes that the students noted and write them on the board.
- 3) Explain that they will be put into groups and will read a story from a foreign country, summarize it, give examples of the Five Themes from it, and draw a map of the country. Their map should depict the capital, at least five other cities, major landforms (lakes, rivers, etc.), symbols and a key, and a compass rose. (Teacher should use his or discretion as for the details of the maps.)
- 4) Put students into groups of 2 or 3 assigning one to be the reader, one to be the recorder, and one to be responsible for the map and materials. Or students may work independently.)
- 5) Pass out the “Examples of the Five Themes From Your Story” worksheet and briefly review it.
- 6) Give each group a book and have them start reading. When they are finished reading they should write a brief summary of the story.
- 7) They should then list the Five Themes that they extracted from their stories on separate documents.
- 8) They are to draw or trace a map of the country from which their story originated, label the features noted in #3 (or any others that the teacher decides), and use color. Teacher should decide how much detail their maps should include.
- 9) They are to finally tape or glue their maps, summaries, and Five Themes examples in an aesthetically pleasing way on to the poster board.

## Assessment

Actively monitor and guide the groups as they work.

Evaluate the summaries according to the six traits of writing for Organization, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions

Evaluate the maps for neatness and for inclusion of the stated features.

Evaluate the Five Themes for completion and clarity.

Evaluate the neatness of the total project and check that all the required features are present.

### Extensions and Accommodations

The teacher may discover other geographic activities that are specific to particular stories.

For students with learning or reading disabilities, they could draw a picture from the story and write a caption for it instead of writing a summary or instead of the Five Themes.

Students may explore other aspects of their story's country for a research project. Students can apply the Five Themes to other types of literature.

Students can write their own folk tales that take place in an imagined land and create a map, as well as relate the Five Themes to their story.

## **Five Themes Question Sheet**

Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper about the country from which your story originated.

### **Theme 1: Location**

- What is the absolute location of the capital of your country? (Give latitude and longitude).
- What is the relative location of your country? (Where is it located in relation to other countries or landforms?)

### **Theme 2: Place**

- What are the physical characteristics of your country? (For example, mountains, deserts, rivers, climate, animal life, etc.)
- What are the human characteristics of your country? (For example, population, languages, religions, political systems, etc.)

### **Theme 3: Human/Environment Interaction**

From your story give examples of:

- Humans depending on the environment.
- Humans modifying their environment.
- Humans adapting to the environment.

**Theme 4: Movement**

- What examples of movement of people, goods, or ideas do you see in the story?

**Theme 5: Regions**

- How does the region in your story differ from the region in which you live? How is it similar? Be sure to cite both physical and human differences and similarities.

**Examples of the Five Themes from Your Foreign Story**

Directions: Fill in the missing information to help you determine examples of the five themes from your story.

Location

Where does the story take place? (Country, setting) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Place

Season \_\_\_\_\_

Climate \_\_\_\_\_

Animals \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Plants \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Customs \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Religion \_\_\_\_\_

Clothing styles \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Holidays \_\_\_\_\_

### Human-Environment Interaction

Housing styles/materials \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Agriculture or mining (What kinds of crops, livestock, and other natural resources are mentioned?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Environmental problems \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Examples of modifying, adapting, or depending on the environment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Movement

Types of transportation \_\_\_\_\_

Examples of communication \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Regional Characteristics

Language \_\_\_\_\_

Food \_\_\_\_\_

Examples of physical and human characteristics that are similar to your own

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Examples of physical and human characteristics that are different from your  
own \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_