

# Study Guide for Teachers

## Sherry Norfolk

### "Brer Rabbit - Here, There & Everywhere"

#### **About Sherry Norfolk:**

Sherry, with a B.A. in Elementary Education (Indiana University 1970) and a Masters in Library Science (Indiana University 1979), performs and teaches storytelling residencies through the Georgia Council for the Arts, Alabama State Council on the Arts, Kentucky Arts Council, Alaska Arts Council, South Carolina Arts Commission, and Young Audiences of St. Louis. Her 17- year career as a children's librarian led her to storytelling as an effective means of motivating children to read, and her years in the pre-K and primary classroom taught her the power of storytelling as an educational tool. Sherry currently serves as consultant to Turner South in developing and implementing their "Storytelling in Education" project. She and her husband Bobby are the co-authors of *The Moral of The Story: Folktales for Character Development* (August House Publishers, 1999).

#### **Curriculum Connections:**

*This program is designed to develop Critical Thinking Skills such as analyzing, evaluating, comparing and contrasting, interpreting, conceptualizing, synthesizing.*

#### *Language arts*

4-5: as students listen they will predict/infer actions & outcomes; compare & contrast one story with another; make generalizations; think about cause and effect; make the distinction between fantasy and realism.

6-8: as students listen they will make inferences, predictions and comparisons; be exposed to folktales from several cultures ; analyze literature for plot, conflict, cause & effect, tone, character.

9-12: as students listen they will connect, visualize, predict/infer, draw conclusions; they will be exposed to folktales and oral literature.

#### **Program Objectives**

- Trickster rabbit stories appear in various cultures
- There are striking similarities and differences between the stories
- Stories are shared between cultures through many channels, including trade, travel and inter-marriage.

#### **Program Summary**

A comparative glimpse of trickster rabbit tales from African, Native Alaskan, Hispanic, Asian and African-American traditions. Trickster Rabbit stories from diverse traditions demonstrate the similarities and differences among these cultures; stories are humorous and lively, featuring appropriate traditional instruments such as kalimba, jaw-harp and maracas.

## Vocabulary

Critical thinking skills -- "higher order thinking skills" such as analyzing, evaluating, comparing and contrasting, interpreting, conceptualizing, synthesizing

Trade routes -- customary means of travel between people or countries engaged in business with one another

Slave-trade -- the practice of capturing and selling human-beings to work in captivity

Parallels -- similarities in story structure, content and plot

Trickster -- a character who uses his/her cleverness and intelligence to outwit more physically powerful foes.

## Overview of Art Form:

Storytelling is the art of using words, gestures, facial expression, and body language to bring a story to life in the listener's imagination. From the beginning of time, storytelling has been the way cultures have preserved and celebrated their memories, passed on their values and belief systems, entertained, instructed and reported. Today, storytelling continues to invite us all to "Enter the Theater of the Mind -- the Imagination!"

## Pre- and Post Activities:

Pre: Who is Brer Rabbit? Where does he come from? Is Brer Rabbit the only trickster in stories? If not, name a few other tricksters.

Post: *Black History.* Analyze the ways in which the slave trade influenced the dissemination of the trickster stories.

*Multicultural:* Each of these stories comes from a different culture. Look at the ways habitat, religious beliefs and cultural values are reflected in these stories. compare & contrast the rabbit's character in each story.

*Literature & Language Arts:* ask students to write their own rabbit story, reflecting a particular culture. This demonstrates the ability to synthesize & conceptualize information.

*Science:* explore the habitats of rabbits or the types of rabbits around the world. Analyze traits of real rabbits might lead people to think of them as tricky and smart?

*Math:* use Venn diagrams to chart the unique and overlapping elements of the stories

*History & Social Studies:* Identify a story theme which occurs on at least two continents (such as the theme of rabbit tricking two larger animals into a tug-of-war, which is told in Brazil, Africa, and the US. Ask kids to develop and support a theory for the occurrence of this theme on several different continents (interpretation and analyzation)

*Foreign Language:* teach children the Swahili, Spanish (or Chinese or Athabascan) words for rabbit and trickster

*Music:* Rabbit isn't the only trickster -- listen to the music of Tyl Eulenspiegel and identify the trickster theme. (analyze)

## Resources

Lester, Julius. *Tales of Uncle Remus: the Adventures of Brer Rabbit.*(Dial, 1987) (and others)

Belting, Natalia. *The Long-Tail Bear and Other Indian Legends.* Bobbs-Merrill, 1961.1

DeSpain, Pleasant. *Eleven Nature Tales: A Multicultural Journey.* August House, 1996.

Milord, Susan. *Tales Alive! Ten Multicultural Folktales with Activities.* Williamson Publishing, 1995.