



Yoruba Legends: Southern Nigeria

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Grade level: 3rd - 5th

Time Frame: 60 minutes

Objective:

- To have students learn about legends and create their own using animals from Nigeria, or from the Southwest
- To have students acquire a new knowledge about the animals of Nigeria
- To have students learn about the tradition of oral storytelling and practice the act of storytelling in written form.

Prior Skills: None required

Sequence of Activities:

I. Warm-up

- Introduce Yoruba Legends: These are stories from the people of Southern Nigeria, from the Yoruba country area. These stories weren't originally written down, they were told by parents to their children for hundreds of years. Most of the stories explain various mysteries of nature and relate to the adventures of humans and animals. (Ogumefu, Yoruba Legends)
- Read the three Yoruba legends to the students
- Brainstorm a list of animals for storytelling. Here is a list of animals that live in Nigeria

1. Lion
2. Giraffe
3. Elephant
4. Hippopotamus
5. Chimpanzee
6. Otter
7. Warthogs
8. Squirrel
9. Mouse
10. Manatee

Desert Animals, for students that would like to create a legend based on the southwest

1. Tarantula
2. Rattle Snake
3. Prairie Dog
4. Coyote
5. Javelina
6. Black Widow
7. Mountain Lion
8. Owl
9. Rabbit
10. Quail

- If students don't know what certain animals look like, have them look at pictures of these animals. The pictures may also aid in prompting opening lines.
- Brainstorm first lines with the students about these animals:
 1. The lion is half-hair and half-skin and this is why:
 2. The elephant needs his ivory tusks and this is why:
 3. The giraffe needs its long neck and this is why:

4. The mouse builds holes to hide in and this why:
5. The manatee has a mermaid fin and this is why:
6. The hippopotamus lives half the time on land and half the time in water and this is why:
7. The chimpanzee has big ears and this is why:
8. The otter used to be a type of prairie dog, but now he lives in the water and this is why:
9. The Javelina always travels with her pack, and this is why:
10. The coyote howls at the moon, and this is why:

II. Collaborative Activity

- Choose one of the animals and one of the opening lines. (You can use a new line that the students have created, or one of the examples.)
- Have them come up with the answer to the opening line.
- Create a legend for the animal with the students
- Here are some questions the students can answer for the collaboration activity, and when they go to create their own legend:

Questions:

What was the animal like before?

Who were they running from?

Who were they friends with?

What did they look like?

Who was hunting them?

What is the problem?

How did they get into trouble?

How are they hiding?

How are they going to win their fight?

Why did their friends leave them?

How did the animal become the way they are today?

What does the animal always do?

Does it howl? Does it bite? Does it crawl? Does it eat something weird?

III. Sharing

- Have students share their stories with the class. If there is time, have students illustrate their stories.

Name _____

Title (name of the animal you chose): _____

Write your question: _____

And that is why the _____ (write the name of your animal) always

The End!

Required Resources:

“The Bat,” “The Water-Bird,” and “How Leopard Got his Spots”

from *Yoruba Legends*, by M. I. Ogumefu, B.A. [London, 1929]

full text online at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/afr/yi/index.htm>

Excerpts:

“The Bat”

The Bat is half a bird and half a rodent, and lives partly on the earth and partly in the air, but both rats and birds shun him, and this is why...

“The Water-Bird”

The water-bird always stands on one leg, and this is why...

“How Leopard Got his Spots”

At one time the Leopard was coloured like a lion, and he had no dark markings; but he was pursued by Akiti, the renowned hunter, and feared that he might be slain...