

Audience

This lesson was used in a Grade 5 class of the English-Ukrainian Bilingual Program. This lesson was developed with the goal of teaching peace and tolerance through the rich gifts of Ukrainian folktales. By using cultural references in the telling of these stories and subsequent follow-up activities, the students had the opportunity to learn something new while staying within the parameters of the Ukrainian Program.

Objectives

- To introduce or re-introduce storytelling to students based on their past experiences.
- To tell the story of The Bear From That Other World.
- To engage students in a map-making activity based on the story of The Bear From That Other World.

Length Approximately 60 -75 minutes.

Rationale

I have developed this lesson with the aim of helping this class to learn about peace and tolerance through storytelling. I feel that this can occur in a way in which students may not even fully realize this is taking place as this will be taught in the context of the Ukrainian Program. I believe that by engaging students in the very rich tradition of a Ukrainian folktale, by experiencing stories and emotions together, it will ultimately bring about more understanding, peace, and tolerance for the students in this classroom.

Description

I will first either introduce or re-introduce storytelling to students based on their past experiences. This will familiarize students with what we are about to do. I will then ask students to engage in a deep-breathing exercise with me to help us all receive the story. Next I will then tell the story The Bear From That Other World. (This is taken from a body of work by Danny Evanishen in his book [The Raspberry Hut](#).) Once the story has been told I will wait for a moment, to allow the story to “settle” with students (and with myself). I will then ask students a series of open-ended questions such as “How did you feel?”, “What happened while you listened?”, “Did anyone have any questions about the story?” ([Becoming the World](#), p. 81) Finally, I will then have students engage in a map-making exercise to show themselves and to share with one another how they imagined the story unfolding. This lesson would include time to celebrate their work and their different interpretations of the story.

Lesson Results and Reflections

The lesson described on the previous page was taught in the Grade 5 class of the English – Ukrainian Bilingual classroom in October, 2007. Perhaps due to my enthusiasm for the teaching of this lesson, or the novelty of something new for the students, or most likely a combination of both, the lesson seemed to go over extremely well. Below are the results of a post lesson survey I asked the students to fill in immediately following the lesson.

Upon commencing the lesson I found that the students indeed had a good general understanding of storytelling thereby eliminating a need for myself to expand upon what storytelling is all about. The students were quite lively at the outset of this lesson so the timing of the deep-breathing exercise was perfect. We engaged in similar deep-breathing and focusing exercises for approximately five minutes (these were modeled from the summer institute session with Laura Sims). I found that after this set of exercises the students were more at ease and definitely more settled and ready to receive the story I was about to tell.

I introduced the story *The Bear From That Other World* as being a story I had learnt from a collection of Ukrainian folktales entitled The Raspberry Hut. I explained that a man from British Columbia by the name of Danny Evanishen had compiled many Ukrainian folktales into a series of books. I brought a number of the books with me to class that day so as to show the students their appearance and to encourage them to explore more of these stories when they next visited our school library. I then proceeded to tell the story which speaks about three brothers and their wealthy father. The youngest brother is mistreated by the others but ends up as the hero of the story mostly through the demonstration of his good character. The story definitely lends itself to many themes such as compassion, forgiveness, and perseverance.

When I finished the story and paused, you could hear a pin drop. The students were completely enamored by the story and this seemed to show me that these students were hungry for storytelling. The ensuing activity proved to be a little less successful than the story listening aspect of the lesson. I attribute this to the fact that the students had been sitting for quite some time and needed to start moving about. Given the opportunity again I would break up the lesson over two consecutive days thereby allowing the students the opportunity to remember the story, execute the activity the next day, and at the same time avoid the restlessness which occurs after approximately one hour in the classroom on any one given subject.

Survey Questions and Results

As this was the first time I had completed a lesson with storytelling I wanted to get a sense from the students as to what their feelings were. Out of 22 students in the class all surveys came back positive with a strong indication that students wanted more of this type of teaching. Students also indicated that they felt the breathing exercises had helped them focus and settle into a listening mode. They also appreciated the opportunity to map out and share what they had imagined.