

Prince Rama and the Monkey King

Teacher Guide Grades K – 6

About the Artists

BOXTALES THEATRE COMPANY uses masks, movement, storytelling and live music to presents myths and folklore from around the world. The performers combine their diverse talents to create a professional, high energy, highly interactive theatrical experience for youth and family audiences. BOXTALES employs the disciplines of storytelling, masks, various movement styles including AcroYoga, and music to breathe life into world mythology and folklore.

Objectives

- To introduce students to one of the world’s greatest epics, the *Rāmāyana*.
- To encourage students to seek out and read more mythology and folklore from all over the world.
- To help develop creative imagination.
- To introduce the importance of oral tradition and theatre as an educational tool.
- To present stories that will help raise self-esteem and teach important lessons.
- To encourage students to identify character traits, attitudes, and situations existing in the story as well as in our contemporary society.

Preparation of the Program

Myth has played a very significant role in the development of civilization. Through the development of myths mankind has been able to pass down from generation to generation the history and beliefs of early ancestors, and teach us how to live a better life.

This kind of material can also be found in dogmatic text, but this has traditionally been the study of clergy and intellectuals. Through the ages the most effective forms of this “wisdom” for the general populous have been narrative and allegorical in nature.

The ancient art of myth transforms us by helping us to turn the meaninglessness of existence into the meaningfulness of life. The stories are about the deepest issues of humanity. They help us to see who we really are and what we are really capable of doing. Myths tend to be revelatory, and transformational in nature. They transform us by helping us to see that which is eternal in life and that which is ephemeral. They transform us by showing us that though the world may be indifferent to us, we do not have to be indifferent to each other. They transform us by opening our lives to wonder, to the mystery of the strange, terrible, beautiful universe that is our home. Myths teach us that, as frail and temporary as we are, we have the power of narrative, the power of creating ideas, the power of naming, the power of understanding, and the power of love.

Storytelling

For thousands of years, as people struggled to survive, they passed through stories what wisdom and knowledge they accumulated. In early times, storytelling was used to explain significant and often confusing events such as storms, tidal waves, lightening, and fire. Special types of stories about heroes and gods were used to bind individuals to common belief systems. Moral tales conveyed the first codes or laws that ensured the harmony, cooperation, and ultimately the success of early human populations. Since prehistory, stories have taken many forms, from written texts to forms of architecture, and painting. Perhaps the oldest form is the oral tradition-passing on wisdom, knowledge, and culture through the spoken word.

The oldest stories told are myths, legends, and folktales. Every culture has their own set of tales passing them on from generation to generation by word of mouth. The purpose of these stories were varied and complex, and included stories concerning the creation of the earth and the cosmos, the creation of humans, their trials and death, moral lessons, religion, and tales purely told for entertainment.

India

India, officially the Republic of India, is a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by geographical area, the second-most populous country (with an estimated population of 1.2 billion), and the most populous democracy in the world. Though India is a quickly growing country, it still suffers from high levels of poverty, illiteracy, disease, and malnutrition. India is also home to a diversity of wildlife in a variety of protected habitats.

The first known permanent settlements in India appeared over 9,000 years ago and gradually developed into the Indus Valley Civilization, dating back to 3300 BCE in western India. The Indian subcontinent was identified with its commercial and cultural wealth for much of its long history. Four major religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism originated here, while Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam arrived in the first millennium CE and shaped the region's diverse culture.

Gradually annexed by the British East India Company from the early eighteenth century and colonized by the United Kingdom from the mid-nineteenth century, India became an independent nation in 1947 after a struggle for independence that was marked by widespread non-violent resistance.

Gandhi

Spiritual/Political Leader and Humanitarian, 1869 – 1948

(Mohandas Karamchand) Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, India. He became one of the most respected spiritual and political leaders of the Twentieth Century. Gandhi helped free the Indian people from British rule through nonviolent resistance, and is honored by his people as the father of the Indian Nation. The Indian people called him Gandhi Mahatma, meaning Great Soul.

Gandhi studied law in London and returned to India in 1891 to practice. In 1893 moved to South Africa where he worked for 21 years to secure rights for Indian people. There he developed a method of direct social action based upon the principles courage, nonviolence and truth called Satyagraha. He believed that the way people behave is more important than what they achieve. Satyagraha promoted nonviolence and civil disobedience as the most appropriate methods for obtaining political and social goals.

In 1915 Gandhi returned to India. Within 15 years he became the leader of the Indian nationalist movement. Gandhi was arrested many times by the British for his activities in South Africa and India. Altogether he spent seven years in prison for his political activities. More than once Gandhi

used fasting to impress upon others the need to be nonviolent.

India was granted independence in 1947, and partitioned into India and Pakistan. Gandhi had been an advocate for a united India where Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace. On January 13, 1948, at the age of 78, he began a fast with the purpose of stopping the fighting that had broken out after the partition. After 5 days the opposing leaders pledged to stop the fighting and Gandhi broke his fast. Twelve days later he was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic who opposed his program of tolerance for all creeds and religion.

AcroYoga

Acro-Yoga is a physical practice which blends elements of Yoga, Acrobatics, and Thai Massage. These three ancient lineages form the foundation of a practice that cultivates trust, connection and playfulness between partners. Minimally practice includes a base and a flyer; beginners (and those trying out advanced poses for the first time) often use a third party spotter to ensure the safety of the flyer.

There are three primary roles in an Acro-Yoga practice: **base**, **flyer**, and **spotter**.

Base - this is the individual who has the most points of contact with the ground. Often this person is laying on the ground with their entire back torso in full contact. This enables both the arms and legs to be "bone-stacked" for maximum stability and support of the flyer. Main points of contact with the flyer are the feet (generally placed on the Flyers hips) and the hands (which either form handholds or grasp the shoulders).

Flyer - this is the individual who is elevated off the ground by the base. The Flyer can move into a series of dynamic positions, and generally lets gravity do the work for them. A flier needs balance, confidence, and core strength.

Spotter - this is the individual who has an objective view of the partners, and whose entire focus is on making sure that the Flyer lands safely in case of any slips. The spotter can also make recommendations to the Base and Flyer to improve their form.

About the Rāmāyana

The *Rāmāyana* [*Rah-MY-annah*], meaning Rama's journey, is one of India's most important epics and sacred texts from the classical Sanskrit canon. It is an epic poem that tells the story of Lord Rama, the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu.

The *Rāmāyana* is a story about overcoming fear in the face of adversity by summoning both courage and compassion. Rama represents the balance between god and man. Part of his purpose is to inspire and nurture the human being in his or her striving to be the best version of themselves.

Its actual date of composition is unknown, but is traditionally dated to sometime between the second to eighth centuries BCE by the poet Valmiki. *The Rāmāyana* is 24, 000 verses (slokas) long, divided into seven books. Traditionally, storytellers recite the *Rāmāyana* for their audience in sessions lasting up to nine days. Normally, the audience comes and goes while the devoted storyteller recites the epic from beginning to end without sleep.

Synopsis of the Rāmāyana

As a young prince Rama is about to take over his father's crown to become king but destiny wills it otherwise: he is banned from his rightful kingdom for fourteen years. Rama, his wife Sita (the reincarnation of the Goddess Lakshmi) and his brother Lakshmana leave together and enter the wilderness of the jungle. During their pilgrimage they meet many *rishis* (the holy men and women who live in simple temples throughout the jungle). The trio absorbs deep wisdom from the *rishis*. At the same time Rama and his brother are bound to protect the sages

from the demons (*rakshasas*) who are ravaging the otherwise blissful, wilderness. Rama's destiny is anchored to his mission to destroy darkness and illusion. Rama is the idealized man and he is a master of Dharma (the virtuous path of righteous duty). At the core of this classic story is also the intense love-based relationship between Rama and Sita: the god and the goddess incarnated and embodied.

Synopsis of our Play

Prince Rama was taught about duty, conduct, spiritual law and respect for his elders by the Guru Vishvamitra, who also taught Rama the fighting arts and gave him magical weapons to use in the fight against evil. Rama is set to be crowned King, but is instead banished from his home to the jungle with his wife Sita. In the jungle, Sita is kidnapped by the evil demon king Ravana. Rama befriends the legendary Hanuman, a great leader of an ancient and magic race of monkeys, who helps Rama defeat Ravana and free Sita. Rama and Sita return home to rule for ten thousand years.

Character List

Rama Incarnation of God Vishnu, hero of the Ramayana

Sita Rama's wife

Vishvamitra A famous sage who is Rama's guru

Hanuman King of monkeys and Rama's devoted friend

Jatayu A great vulture, friend of Rama

Ravana The evil king of the demon city Lanka and Ruler of the Three Worlds

Kumbhakarna Ravana's brother, sleeping giant who eats everything and anything with insatiable hunger.

Further Vocabulary Related to the Rāmāyana

Adharma *opposite to dharma. That which is not in accordance with human and divine law.*

Astra *magic, supernatural weapon. When these mythic weapons were empowered by specific and special spells they turned into magic weapons with super powers such as causing flood, thunder, lightning, or becoming a thousand venomous snakes or daggers.*

AUM, OM *A holy syllable that represents the ultimate reality.*

Bhakti *Devotion, worship*

Brahma *A God of the Hindu Trinity; the creator*

Dandaka *The forest (jungle) where Rama spends his exile.*

Deva *Celestial elemental beings; God; Being of Light*

Dharma *Hindu/vedic term for the righteous and virtuous path.*

Guru *Spiritual teacher; master*

Kishkinda *The Kingdom of monkeys*

Lakshmi *The Goddess of Fortune; female divine principle and consort of Vishnu.*

Lanka *The island where Ravana lives (of the same location as contemporary Sri Lanka)*

Mantra *Sacred incantation.*

Prana *Life breath*

Rakshasas *demons*

Siva (Shiva) *A God of the Hindu Trinity: the Destroyer*

Vishnu *A god of the Hindu Trinity: the Preserver*

Yagna *sacrifice*

Yoga *"Union;" union with the Self, with God.*

Pre-Performance Activities

Read all or parts of the *Rāmāyana*. A wonderful translation is done by Ramesh Menon, but here is a more succinct synopsis:

Dasharatha was the king of Ayodhya. He was loved by one and all. His subjects were happy and his kingdom was prosperous. Even though Dasharatha had everything that he desired, he was very sad at heart for he had no children.

During the same time, there lived a powerful Rakshasa (demon) king in the island of Ceylon, located just south of India. He was called Ravana. His tyranny knew no bounds; his subjects disturbed the prayers of holy men.

Dasharatha was advised by his family priest to perform a fire sacrifice ceremony to ask the Gods for children. Vishnu, the preserver of the universe, decided to be reborn as the eldest son of Dasharatha in order to kill Ravana. After the ceremony, Dasharatha's three wives gave birth to four sons. Kausalya, the eldest queen, gave birth to the eldest son Rama. Bharata, the second son was born to Kaikeyi, and Sumitra gave birth to the twins Lakshmana and Shatrughna. The four princes grew up to be tall, strong, handsome, and brave.

One day, the revered sage Viswamitra came to Ayodhya. He blessed Dasharatha and asked him to send Rama to kill the Rakshasas who were disturbing his ceremonies. Rama was then only fifteen years old. Dasharatha agreed to send Rama and Lakshmana, and he strictly ordered his sons to obey Rishi Viswamitra and fulfill all his wishes.

Viswamitra, Rama, and Lakshmana soon reached Dandaka forest where the Rakshasi Tadaka lived with her son Maricha. A fierce battle ensued between the huge Rakshasi and Rama. Finally, Rama pierced her heart with a deadly arrow and Tadaka crashed down to the earth. Viswamitra was pleased. He taught Rama several Mantras (divine chants), which Rama could use to summon many divine weapons through meditation in order to fight against evil.

The next morning, Viswamitra, Rama, and Lakshmana headed towards the city of Mithila. King Janaka of Mithila wanted his beautiful daughter Sita to marry the bravest and strongest prince in the country. So he had vowed that he would give Sita in marriage only to the one who could string the great bow of Siva. Many had tried before. None could even move the bow, let alone string it.

Viswamitra introduced Rama and Lakshmana to Janaka and requested that he show the bow of Siva to Rama so that he could try to string it. Rama then picked up the bow with ease, and got ready for the stringing. He placed one end of the bow against his toe, put forth his might, and bent the bow to string it - when to everyone's surprise the bow snapped in two! Sita was relieved. She had liked Rama at first sight.

Dasharatha gladly gave his consent to the marriage and came to Mithila with his retinue. Janaka arranged for a grand wedding. After the wedding, Dasharatha and the newly married party returned to Ayodhya.

For twelve years Rama and Sita lived happily in Ayodhya. One day, Dasharatha summoned his ministers to ask their opinion about crowning Rama as King of Ayodhya. They unanimously welcomed the suggestion. Dasharatha announced the decision and gave orders for the coronation. During this time, Bharata and Shatrughna had gone to visit relatives.

Kaikeyi, Bharata's mother, was in the palace rejoicing with the other queens. She loved Rama as her own son; but her wicked maid, Manthara, was unhappy. She wanted Bharata to be the king so she devised a plan to thwart Rama's coronation. As soon as it was set firmly in her mind, she rushed to Kaikeyi and repeatedly gave her poisoned suggestions, clouding her mind and heart with suspicion and doubt. Kaikeyi, confused and distraught, finally agreed.

The night before the coronation, Dasharatha came to Kaikeyi to share his happiness at seeing Rama the crown prince of Kosala. But Kaikeyi angrily said, "You have promised me two boons. Now please grant me them. Let Bharata be crowned as king and not Rama. Rama should be

banished from the kingdom for fourteen years." Dasharatha could hardly believe his ears, but Kakeyi refused to yield. The next morning Dasharatha's minister came to inform him that all the preparations for the coronation were ready. But Dasharatha was too distraught to speak. Kakeyi asked the minister to call Rama immediately and she informed him of his father's promise. Rama accepted this fate with humility and calm. By that evening Rama, Sita and Lakshmana had left Ayodhya to live like hermits in the forest. Dasharatha died soon after of a broken heart.

When Bharata returned to Ayodhya, he realized that something was terribly wrong. He went straight to his mother, Kaikeyi. She looked pale, and slowly informed him of what had happened in his absence. He was stunned by the news. Bharata burst into tears and promised Kaushalya, Rama's mother, to bring Rama back to Ayodhya as quickly as possible. After completing the funeral rites for his father, Bharata started for the forest. He halted the army at a respectful distance and walked alone to meet his brothers. Seeing Rama, Bharata fell at his feet and told him of their father's death. Bharata asked Rama to return to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom. But Rama refused.

When Bharata realized Rama's firmness in fulfilling his promises, he begged Rama to give him his sandals. Bharata told Rama the sandals would represent Rama and that he would carry out the duties of the kingdom as Rama's representative. Rama gracefully agreed. Bharata carried the sandals to Ayodhya with great reverence. After reaching the capital, he placed the sandals on the throne and ruled the kingdom in Rama's name.

Surpanakha, Ravana's sister, lived near Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. One day Surpanakha happened to see Rama and instantly fell in love with him. Surpanakha was infuriated when Rama refused her advances and attacked Sita. Lakshmana swiftly intervened and saved her. Surpanakha ran away with her nose bleeding to seek help from her brothers, Khara and Dushana. Both the brothers got red with anger and rallied their army. Rama and Lakshmana fought them off and all the demons were all killed.

Surpanakha immediately flew to Lanka to seek Ravana's protection. Ravana was outraged to see his sister mutilated. She described all that happened. When he heard that Sita was the most beautiful woman in the world, Ravana decided to abduct her. He convinced Maricha to help him. Maricha took the form of a beautiful golden deer and began to graze near Rama's cottage. Sita asked Rama to get the golden deer for her. He hurriedly instructed Lakshmana to look after Sita and ran after the deer. Very soon Rama realized that the deer was not a real one. He shot an arrow which hit the deer and Maricha was exposed.

Before dying, Maricha imitated Rama's voice and shouted, "Help!" Sita heard the voice and asked Lakshmana to run and rescue Rama. Lakshmana was hesitant. He was confident that Rama was invincible and the voice was only a fake. He tried to convince Sita but she insisted. Finally Lakshmana agreed. Before his departure, he drew a magic circle around the cottage and asked her not to cross the line.

From his hiding place Ravana was watching all that was happening. He disguised himself as a hermit and came near Sita's cottage. Standing beyond the protection line, he asked for alms. Sita came out with a bowl full of rice to offer to the holy man, staying within the line around her cottage. The hermit asked her to come closer. Sita was unwilling to cross the line but when Ravana pretended to leave without alms she crossed the line to offer them to him. Ravana did not lose the opportunity. He quickly pounced on Sita and seized her. Very soon Ravana's chariot left the ground and flew over the clouds to Lanka.

Both the brothers suspected foul play and ran towards the cottage. It was empty. They searched, and called out her name but all in vain. Lakshmana tried to console Rama as best as he could. Suddenly they heard a cry. They ran towards the source and found a wounded eagle. It was Jatayu, the king of eagles and a friend of Dasharatha.

Jatayu narrated with great pain, "I saw Ravana abducting Sita. I attacked him but Ravana cut my wing and made me helpless. Then he flew towards the south." After saying this, Jatayu died. Rama and Lakshmana buried him and moved towards the south.

After a long walk, Rama and Lakshmana reached the Rishyamukha Mountain. On seeing Rama and Lakshmana from a distance, Hanuman, a monkey lord, disguised himself as an ascetic and met Rama and Lakshmana on their path. The brothers told Hanuman of their intention to meet the monkey king to ask for help to find Sita. Hanuman was impressed by their courteous behavior and removed his garb. Then he agreed to lend his monkey army in their quest.

As Sita flew, she had dropped her ornaments on the ground. These were traced by the monkey army and it was concluded that Sita was carried southwards. When they reached the shore they had to stop, not knowing how to cross the huge sea that stretched in front of them.

Hanuman was the son of Pavana, the wind god. He could change his size and he could fly. Hanuman grew to a huge size and jumped to cross the ocean. As he neared Lanka, he contracted his body and alighted as a tiny insignificant creature. He passed through the city unnoticed and managed to enter the palace quietly, but he could not find Sita.

Finally, Hanuman located her in one of the Ravana's gardens. She was surrounded by the Rakshashis who were guarding her. Hanuman hid on a tree and watched Sita from a distance. She was in deep distress, crying and praying to the Gods for her relief. Hanuman's heart melted in pity.

Just then Ravana entered the garden and approached Sita. "I have waited enough. Be sensible and become my queen. Rama cannot cross the ocean and come through this impregnable city." Sita sternly replied, "I have repeatedly told you to return me to Lord Rama before his wrath falls upon you." Ravana got furious, "You have gone beyond the limits of my patience. You give me no choice but to kill you unless you change your mind. I shall be back in a few days."

Hanuman came down from his hiding place and gave Rama's ring to Sita. He asked Sita to take a ride on his back to return to Rama. "I do not want to return home secretly" said Sita, "I want Rama to defeat Ravana and take me back with honor." Hanuman agreed. Then Sita gave Hanuman her necklace as evidence of their meeting.

Before departing from the garden, Hanuman wanted Ravana to learn a lesson for his misconduct. So he began to uproot the garden. Soon the Rakshasa warriors came running to catch the monkey but they were beaten. Ravana was enraged. He asked Indrajeet, his able son, to capture Hanuman. A fierce battle ensued and Hanuman was captured. He was taken to Ravana's court where he introduced himself as the messenger of Rama. "You have abducted the wife of my all powerful master, Lord Rama. If you want peace, return her with honor to my master or else you and your kingdom will be destroyed."

Ravana was wild with rage. He ordered Hanuman's tail to be set on fire. The Rakshasa army paraded Hanuman through the streets of Lanka. He soon escaped and, with the torch of his burning tail, jumped from roof to roof and set the city on fire. Finally, Hanuman went to the shore to put out his tail in the water and jumped back across the sea.

When Hanuman rejoined the monkey army he quickly went to Rama. He took out the necklace that Sita had given him and placed it in Rama's hands. Rama burst into tears when he saw it.

Vibhishana, Ravana's cautious brother, ran away to Rama's camp and sought permission to meet him. The monkeys were suspicious but took him to Rama as a captive. Rama gave him sanctuary and Vibhishana became the closest adviser to Rama in the war against Ravana. Rama promised Vibhishana that he would make him the future king of Lanka.

To reach Lanka, Rama decided to build a bridge across the ocean. Immediately, thousands of monkeys set about the task of gathering the materials to build it. It was a stupendous undertaking. But the entire army worked hard and completed the bridge in just five days. Then they crossed over to Lanka.

The next morning Rama ordered the monkey army to attack. The monkeys rushed forward and hurled huge boulders against the city walls and gates. The battle continued for a long time. At one point Ravana himself came forward. He hurled a powerful missile at Lakshmana. It descended like a fierce thunderbolt and hit Lakshmana's chest hard, and he fell down senseless.

While Lakshmana was recovering, Rama challenged Ravana himself. Following a fierce fight, Ravana's chariot was smashed and he was sorely wounded. He stood helpless before Rama, who took pity on him and said, "Go and rest now. Return tomorrow to resume our fight."

Ravana's son Indrajeet consoled him and promised to defeat the enemy quickly. He made himself invisible and went into battle. Arrows came from all directions and finally one of the powerful arrows hit Lakshmana. The physician was called. He declared that Lakshmana was only in a deep coma and instructed Hanuman to go to Gandhamadhana Hill, where a special medicinal herb grew. Hanuman hurled himself in the air and traveled there. Unable to locate the herb, he lifted the entire mountain and carried it to Lanka. The physician immediately applied the herb and Lakshmana regained consciousness. Rama was relieved and when the battle resumed, Lakshmana killed Indrajeet.

With the fall of Indrajeet, Ravana was in complete despair. He furiously rushed to the battlefield and came face to face with Rama. The fight was intense. Finally Rama repeated the mantras as taught by Viswamitra, and hurled his weapon with all his might towards Ravana. It whizzed through the air emitting scorching flames and hit him. Ravana fell dead from his chariot.

After Ravana's death, Vibhishana was crowned king of Lanka. The message of Rama's victory was sent to Sita. Hanuman and all other monkeys came to pay their respect. Meeting Rama, Sita was overcome with joy. Rama, however, seemed to be far away in thought. At length Rama spoke, "I am happy to rescue you from the hands of Ravana but you have lived a year in the enemy's abode. It is not proper that I should take you back now."

Sita could not believe what Rama said. Bursting in tears Sita asked, "Was that my fault? The monster carried me away against my wishes." Sita was deeply grieved and decided to end her life in fire. She turned to Lakshmana and with tearful eyes she implored him to prepare the fire. Lakshmana looked at his elder brother, hoping for some type of reprieve, but there was no sign of emotion on Rama's face and he said nothing. So Lakshmana built a large fire. Sita approached the blaze. Joining her palms in salutation, she addressed Agni, the God of fire, and stepped into the flames. Then Agni arose from the flames, gently lifted Sita out unharmed, and presented her to Rama. Rama was overwhelmed with relief that she had been proven faithful before the whole world.

Rama and Sita were now reunited and ascended on a chariot along with Lakshmana to return to Ayodhya. When the party reached Ayodhya, the entire city was waiting to receive them. Rama was crowned king and he took up the reins of government much to the great joy of his subjects.

Follow-Up Ideas and Activities

- These topics can either be discussed as a class or used as essay topics.
 - Do you relate with any of the characters in the story?
 - What were the various feelings you experienced while watching the play and why?
 - In what ways was the play different from the story that you read?
 - Was it missing anything important to you? What?
 - What masks and props were used in the play? How do the masks, stilts, and props affect the telling of the story on stage?
 - How would you describe the music in the play? How does the music affect the telling of the story on stage?
 - What would it be like to give up all your worldly riches and live in the forest?
 - What are heroes and heroines? What is a demon? What is a holy person? What is heroic about Rama, Sita, Hanuman and even Ravana? What is unheroic about them?
 - Could Rama and Sita be used as role models today in our culture?
 - Does this story remind you of any other stories? List them and their similarities.

- Break the students up into groups and have them take turns telling the story.
- Write a review of BOXTALES' *Prince Rama & The Monkey King*.
- Write your own story that shows the reader one way to be a good person/citizen/child/parent/friend/etc.
- You could also group students together for:

A Storytelling Festival

This activity encourages students to explore folk tales and aspects of oral storytelling, and to share their knowledge with others.

WHAT YOU NEED

Examples of legends or folktales from any culture. Children can choose stories from the culture their family feels most strongly linked to - such as Mexico, Spain, Africa, Ireland, North America, France, Japan, the Philippines - and put together stories with similar themes.

WHAT TO DO

1. Introduce students to legends and folk tales by reading a variety to the class (or referring to the BOXTALES performance.) If possible, choose a story that explains some aspect of the culture from which it comes, such as the origin of a custom or of an element in the natural world.
2. Explain that many of these stories were invented by rural storytellers, who passed them on to others orally, not in writing. Only later were they written down. Tell students that they are going to become oral storytellers themselves. They will choose a story to learn and then present the story as part of a storytelling festival. (Note: 398 and 398.2 section of the library is mythology and folktales from all over the world.)
3. Divide students into storytelling teams. Give students time to do research and to choose a story. Tell students that their story should say something important about the culture from which it comes. Remind students that their stories will be performed and that they might want to choose a story that lends itself to a dramatic reading or presentation. (Note: You might want to review the groups' choices. Look for simple forms with good morals, dynamic characters, good action, etc.)
4. The group should study the story and make a plan for how they would like to perform it. For example, students may want to assign different parts of the story to each group member or have one group member act out a part or play an instrument, etc. Encourage students to be creative about their presentations. Some students may want to add music and props; some may be able to incorporate costumes or rhythmic movements.
5. Allow enough rehearsal time for each group. Hold the first performances in the classroom. Then discuss with students how to share the story with other classes, or with family and community members. (Note: You may find that the quality is so high you want to charge a cover and fund your next production with the proceeds!)

A Percussion Workshop

Here are some suggestions for quick, cheap, and easy ways to make "musical instruments" with your students. Try out different ways of making rhythms and have students try different instruments. Remember that music and rhythm is mathematically based.

Body Percussion: Hand claps; Hand rubs; Finger snaps; Foot stomps; Foot shuffles; Knee, thigh, chest, tummy, and shoulder slaps; Tongue clicks; Finger flicks against a cheek

Drumsticks - Different drumsticks or beaters will give the same "instrument" many different sounds: Hands, fingers, thumbs; Sticks, pens, pencils, rulers; Short lengths of dowel or bamboo; Spoons; For a "brushed percussion" sound, use a kitchen basting brush, a scrubbing brush, a large, stiff paint brush, or wire brush.

Beaters - Secure one of the following onto the end of a stick, a pencil, or a short length of 1/2" dowel: A cork; A large wooden bead; Wrap many rubber bands around one end of the stick; A

rubber ball or "superball"; Wrap one end of the stick, or wrap the bead or ball, with yarn or string; Wrap felt or cloth around the end of the stick, or around the bead or ball.

Drums - Real drums (instruments in which you beat on a thin, taut membrane) are quite sophisticated, difficult-to-construct instruments. Here are some easy stand-ins: Empty plastic milk jugs; Upside-down pails, buckets, basins, or large cans; Empty plastic tubs (like margarine or ice cream tubs) with the lids on - usually, the bigger the tub, the better; Lid or bottom (or both) of a large, empty coffee can; A sheet of canvas, plastic, plastic wrap, plastic bag, rubber, wrapping paper, waxed paper, or poster board stretched very taut over the lip of a wooden bowl or a clay flowerpot, held in place by strong tape, heavy rubber bands, or strong cord; the bottom of an empty cylindrical oatmeal box; and don't forget the traditional favorite: pots and pans. Two of any of these in different sizes is a set of bongos

Fillers for Shakers - Different fillers can make very different sounds. Some will last better than others, and some will be messier to work with than others. You may want to seal your shakers once you have made them: Dry rice, noodles, or beans; Unpopped popcorn; Beads or sequins of any size (different sizes and kinds will make different sounds); Nuts or seeds; Pebbles; Sand or salt; Bottle caps (If you can make holes in the bottle caps you can also string them together to make rattles or tambourines.)

Containers for shakers or maracas - To turn your shaker into a maraca, make a hole in the container, put a stick, pencil, or short length of 1/2" dowel into the hole, and tape it together: Paper bag or plastic bag; Plastic Easter egg; Empty plastic tubs with lids ;Dried gourd; Hollow balls, for example tennis balls and plastic "softballs"; Some seed pods come already filled with dried seeds and make great shakers; Make your own with papier-mâché.

Cymbals, Gongs, Bells and Triangles - The trick to getting a good sound out of these instruments is to let them vibrate freely. Don't touch the part that is supposed to "ring" with your fingers or anything soft. Hold it by a handle, hang it from a piece of string (make a hole in the object, or tape the string to it), or set it on a hard surface. Metal bowls that are a single curved surface (with no extra rim on the bottom to steady them) make great gongs. Set them on a hard surface. For a really cool effect, try swirling a very small amount of water in the bowl and strike it while the water is still swirling: A metal clothes hanger; Trash can lids or pot lids; Metal pie plate; Hung flowerpots (use a soft beater); The chimes from a wind chimes; String jingle bells or bottle caps on yarn, ribbon, or string to make hand, ankle, or wrist jingles.

Guiros and Washboards - These instruments are played by scraping a hard stick or beater across the corrugations: Heavy corrugated cardboard; Wrap and glue heavy string around a short piece of 1" dowel; Cheese grater; Sandpaper; Stamping stick - A large, thick stick can be played by "stamping" it on the floor or in a bucket or basin.

Claves - Cut two short lengths of dowel, lumber, or sticks (about 1" diameter, and about 6" long) to beat against each other. Smooth, hard wood gives the best sound. Make the sound more resonant by holding one clave cupped lightly in one hand while hitting it with the other: Play thick pieces of bamboo as you would claves, or hang them and play them like gongs; Pencils and wooden spoons can also be played like claves, but the sound will be much softer.

Finger Castanets - tie one button onto the thumb, and another onto the middle finger. Or use the halves of a walnut shell or small metal jar lids

Hand Castanets - loosely hold two spoons close together, back-to-back, in one hand, and swing them against the other hand to make them click; Shake keys on a key ring, or click them against the palm of the hand.

To compliment your percussion instruments, you can - Blow across the lip of a glass jug or bottle. The easiest "wind instrument" to make is a kazoo, which you play by humming into it. Use a square of waxed paper or tissue paper, and either rubber-band it onto one end of a cardboard tube or fold it over the teeth of a small comb.

