

# **Once Upon an Opposite: Using Multi-Cultural Trickster Tales to Promote Literacy**

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## **Overview**

“Comparison is the foundation of all learning. It is when, in making comparisons, we see a connection between what we know and what we don’t know that we have learned something.”

-- Elgen Heinz, Pioneer in Asian Studies Outreach

The intention of the curriculum unit, “Once Upon an Opposite: Using Multi-Cultural Trickster Tales,” is to initiate an instructive, captivating and diverse vocabulary enrichment program for children in a kindergarten classroom. Lessons will examine the role of opposites in selected motifs in animal tales from around the world. To lay the foundation for literacy, children need to learn and understand basic relational concepts, such as opposites. Bruno Bettelheim argues that by dividing everything into opposites, the child can bring order into the world. This unit will delve into such issues. Indeed, isolating and decoding elements of stories build reading comprehension and allow students to become strategic readers. Because we can make any content meaningful and engaging to young children if we build it on the kind of powerful abstract concepts presented in animal tales (for example, good, evil, happy, sad, kind, mean), my unit will explore the significance of opposites in trickster tales.

The form of the animal tale fits into three main categories: trickster tales, fables, and etiological (why, or pourquoi) stories. These stories are a delightful way to teach opposites and a means of introducing students to many cultures. The tales enrich classroom reading and generate a diversity of enrichment activities. This unit will specifically focus on trickster tales. Trickster tales are very popular because of the humorous portrayal of protagonists. Nearly every culture has trickster tales in which a

character uses wit, pranks, lies, deceit, and mischief to triumph over more powerful creatures. Yet tricksters do not always prevail, for they are often victims of another's trickery. Children of all cultures take great delight in this human aspect of the stories. Students will be able to differentiate among the stories through discussion and activities linking the variants of a specific cultural tale. The characters in those stories are generally animals with human traits, dealing with conflicts between good and evil, wisdom and foolishness, security and danger, cleverness and stupidity, hope and despair. This polarization fits into children's expectations of life as they know it, through emotions.

The unit should be completed after the second marking period when students have developed basic concepts of print and can engage in and experiment in reading and writing. The end of March is also the ideal time to explore the genre of trickster tales. Around St. Patrick's Day, students are already familiar with the leprechaun, an Irish trickster known for his cleverness and ability to get out of trouble. A culminating writing activity would be on April fools day when the students will write their own modern day version trickster tale.

Children will identify the origins of trickster tales by utilizing a classroom world map and will be able to describe and list tales variants, and divide the motifs into opposites for discussion and daily journal writing. Selections from the trickster folktale genre and various cross-curricular state standards and objectives are included in each lesson, all of which provide young children with many opportunities to develop understanding of others. And have fun!

## **Rationale**

Research for this unit will examine (1) ways in which children learn language, (2) the enduring power of story-telling through many generations and cultures, (3) why trickster tales are a prime means to teach opposites, and (4) examples of trickster tales from Africa, North America, Europe, and South America.

### **How the Structure and Function of Storytelling Works**

Early childhood teachers have a shared responsibility that every child be given the opportunity to achieve high standards of success in literacy. Most researchers agree that learning to read and write is a complex, multifaceted process that requires a wide variety of instructional approaches (generally Bredekamp, Copple). In fact, children learn best when they become active constructors of their own learning (Cobb 59), and the given instruction is a thoughtful and comprehensive framework for language development, word study, and phonemic awareness. Most often, however, these are taught with a deliberate set of reading standards. Although teachers are encouraged to write "student-

friendly” objectives centered on these state standards, teaching within a homogeneous framework can be a somewhat daunting task. Furthermore, each child exhibits a unique pattern and timing in acquiring reading skills, rendering the uniform application of set standards incompatible with individualized student growth and development.

One way to tackle individual learning variations is to utilize storytelling. Children have listened to stories passed down from their own families and communities long before they reached school age. Their use allows the educator to customize lessons to suit a group of students’ individual interests and cultural identities. Storytelling and fairytales are near universal hallmarks of cultural identity. The persistence of these tales over time and throughout cultures speaks to their engaging appeal, particularly to children. Importantly, language, reading, and writing are strongly shaped by culture, and “the learning of words, letters, and rules of language must be passed down through the culture: these aspects of literacy cannot be invented by children without help” (Geist and Aldridge 37). For this reason, exploiting fairytales to encourage language, reading and writing skills seems like a winning approach to instruction.

Sharing stories with kindergarten children, whether orally or in books, offers an array of opportunities to gain information, conceptualize print, and provide new insights into other worlds. A rich foundation in fairy stories helps students internalize important symbolic patterns, or motifs, which reappear again and again. These stories have universal appeal, abate fears, support divergent thinking, and connect generations. Teachers are encouraged to connect the knowledge children are to acquire with something with which they are already familiar. It would seem entirely appropriate to focus on those elements that appeal to a child’s imagination, because engaging a child’s imagination with folktales and magical fiction strengthens the child’s logical skills in a way that holds their intense personal interest and sets the stage for effective learning (Egan 27-32). Indeed, Cobb has suggested that children learn lessons from fantasy that they are able to hold in their memory for future reference that can be used in reality (46).

Finally, storytelling has been used throughout the ages for entertainment but also as a way to teach lessons and morals. Children attempt to reconcile outer worlds of reality with inner worlds of reflection and imagination (Cobb xi), and fairytales provide a powerful conduit into social reality (Zipes 171). Through story telling, experiences are reduced to primary levels, helping the person articulate what is difficult to express directly (Cobb 22). In this way, stories can be used both to promote and to assess cognitive development, as well as to identify children’s emotional conflicts (Geist and Aldridge 38).

### *The Importance of Opposites*

Learning is a process of comparisons and classifications of both experience and things (Cobb 47-48). Thus, opposites are fundamental to child development because by dividing

things into opposites, children bring order to unfamiliar stories and concepts. Antonyms provide the foundation for the identification of more abstract relationships among a story's elements (Cobb 48), and they help students to recognize and to access the meaning of words embedded in stories. Students build on their prior knowledge, "match[ing] what is seen with what cannot be seen—the experience of other people who have create his language and culture" (Cobb 48). In this way, opposites serve as a tool to help students read unfamiliar texts with success.

Young children's imaginative play and many of their beloved stories often are based on opposites (security/danger, courage/cowardice, good/evil) - and finding a middle ground between them. These characteristics are shared by stories from all races and all peoples (Cobb 29). Children do not need to be able to define these terms, but they have already felt these "feelings" when they started school for the first time or when a friend was mean. Although abstract, these concepts are the poles within which we make experience meaningful (Egan 28). They are abstract yet affective. For example, a medieval forest has little engaging power unless it is structured by a conflict between security and danger, as in "Hansel and Gretel" (Bettelheim 273).

Further, fairytales estrange children from reality, allowing them to cope with anxiety producing incidents and fostering autonomy (Zipes 172). To make sense of every day life, people give events a narrative form (Cobb 50). They act out their fundamental awareness of time and the need to shape it (Cobb 51). Indeed, one study showed that the content of stories told by children predominately contained reflections of their fears and concerns from their daily lives. (Geist and Aldrige 35). Fear of kidnapping, performance anxiety, and social pressure are common elements of their stories (Geist and Aldridge 35). Through stories, children learn by creating their own world image (Cobb 59), and folktales demonstrate that although all men are not good and a struggle against difficulties is unavoidable in life, it is an intrinsic part of human existence. Stories teach that "if one does shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end, emerges victorious" (Bettelheim 272-73). The opposites tales depend on—the "soft textures" and the "muck and mire of life"—create mutual relations that foster understanding and learning (Cobb 31).

### *The Relevance of Tricksters*

One type of tale that very successfully uses the concepts of opposites as a literary device is trickster tales. A trickster tale is a story featuring a protagonist (often an animal with many human features) who has magical powers and is characterized as a compendium of opposites (Encyclopedia Britannica). Tricksters "engage in trickery, deceive, and violate the moral codes of the community" (Greenwood 992). They can be simultaneously an omniscient creator and an innocent fool, a malicious destroyer and a childlike prankster, and alternate between cleverness and stupidity, kindness and cruelty, deceiver and deceived, breaker of taboos and creator of culture (Schlosser, 1997;

Greenwood 992). In fact, many analyses suggest that tricksters as combinations of opposites (God-human, life-death, child-adult, food-excrement, man-woman, heaven-earth, etc.), and the designation of these important cultural categories may be necessary for stability in society (Hansen). They act on the margins of social morality, and their stories allow people to express and feel things through the trickster that would be unsafe to express or experience outside of stories (Greenwood 992).

It is difficult to assign the trickster to any fixed set of characteristics or given forms. That is part of the appeal of the trickster stories. They are funny stories because the trickster will do things that are foolish or even stupid but seem to bring out the best in humanity. Almost every culture has a trickster tale. They pass on trickster tales with plots featuring different problems relevant to their lives and use those familiar motifs to convey broader moral lessons. For example, stories from different cultures utilize motifs involving food, medicine, customs (like marriage), clothing, and other things. The trickery of such stories extends to symbolic play regarding cultural forms, rules, and worldview.

A common trickster in fairytales is the animal trickster. These tales are common in all cultures. Kindergarteners are receptive to these stories because they hear these stories from their parents and other caregivers early in their lives (Geist and Aldridge 36). Further, animal trickster tales are best suited for kindergarten children who are more likely to enjoy and relay fantastical stories than older children. (Geist and Aldridge 35). One such fable is “Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock.” Anansi is a folkloric spider taking both arachnid and human form as best serves his purposes. These stories have African roots. “Raven,” an Inuit tale told by Pacific Northwest Native Americans, tells the story of a shapeshifter imbued with magical powers. Raven balances heroism and trickery to bring a blessing to the characters of the story and teach a lesson about selfishness. The story continues to be a prominent part of the people’s culture to this day, and his image can be found on totem poles, jewelry, and other native crafts. These tales are accessible to kindergarteners, their lessons are timeless and ageless, and they are a ripe source for teaching the basic concept of opposites.

## **Objectives**

This unit is intended for students in a full day, self-contained kindergarten classroom. The purpose of this curriculum unit is twofold: (1) to examine the research on using storytelling, specifically antithetical trickster tales, and its effects on learning to read, and (2) to provide explicit, research-based teaching strategies that enhance children’s vocabulary development.

In alignment with the Pennsylvania Academic Standards, and the Philadelphia Core Curriculum Objectives, this unit will provide a literature-rich based program. The lessons were created to accurately reflect students’ cultural heritage and the contribution

of various ethnic, racial, and cultural groups. Kindergarten students will come to understand that trickster tales will enable them to learn about themselves, their classmates, and their communities as well as families around the world. Through the utilization of oppositional concepts, students will know who they are and how their actions have an effect on their world.

Each lesson will include key components in students' reading comprehension, such as vocabulary acquisition, cause and effect relationships, making inferences, identifying a problem and solution, and main idea/details of a story. The first lesson invites children to set up a "Trickster Tales Literacy Center" in the classroom to feature folktales from around the world. The Center will also display a world map to pinpoint the origins of the tales, and an antonyms word wall that lists new vocabulary words from each story.

Each story will teach a different literacy concept by identifying opposite words. In the story *The Tortoise and the Hare*, the students will compare and contrast the main characters, or protagonists, by using oppositional concepts. In the story *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, many opportunities exist to make inferences about the thoughts and feelings of the characters and to predict how the story will unfold. They also conduct a science experiment by growing their own moss covered rock. The story of *Raven* will examine the story's main idea through a look at the problem presented and its solution.

By the end of the unit, kindergarten students will be able to retell a story in sequence, to describe the main ideas and supporting details, and to make connections to their lives, to other books from the same genre, and to the real world. Further, they will identify antonyms, make and revise predictions using the text's evidence, and use illustrations to infer and predict what happens next in a story.

Cross-curricular objectives are numerous in this unit. Students will be able to identify different types of genres by learning their conventions. For example, folktales have no single author as they were commonly passed along by word of mouth. They are the creation of an entire culture and therefore, belong to everyone. Students will build on their understanding that friends, bullies, and heroes can come from all cultures. Moreover, children will build their knowledge of geography by locating origins of trickster tales on a map of the world, and they will be introduced to basic scientific concepts of plant growth cycles by creating their own moss covered rocks.

### **Instructional Strategies**

Each lesson is designed with reading strategies as outlined in the School District of Philadelphia Core Curriculum Guidebooks. The pre-reading strategies are designed to activate prior knowledge and engage students. Before reading each story, the teacher will review opposite concepts and introduce any unfamiliar words. The teacher will make

flash cards of the opposite words and outline each letter with glitter glue to provide a tactile experience for the student, and then the class will take a picture walk; this is paging through the book and children view illustrations to answer teacher-directed questions. Creating webs (graphic organizers) also help students focus on the text prior to reading. For example, before reading *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, the teacher and the students will construct a spider “web” to ascertain what students already know about spiders. Students identify and list characteristics of spiders (examples could include small, eight legs, hairy, pinchers). In other words, children help to create a “spider with legs” of already known facts about spiders.

When reading each trickster tale, students will learn to think about the text while listening. The teacher will read the same story more than once. Multiple readings of a story can increase children’s knowledge of unfamiliar words and allows children to listen to and to comprehend the story on different levels (Penno, Wilkinson, and Moore 2002). First, the teacher will read the story to the students primarily for their entertainment, but will stop to pause and model observations from the text related to the lesson’s objectives. Next, the teacher will pass out sticky notes for the students to use as the teacher rereads the story. During the second reading, the students will come up and place sticky notes in the book to indicate connections, questions, knowledge of opposite vocabulary words, etc.

After reading each story, the lessons incorporate an activity to foster comprehension. As students become familiar with the components of a story, such as beginning, middle, and ending, and the variants of stories, such as characters, settings, and plots, they become increasingly able to apply them strategically in a variety of reading situations. A wall of opposite words also will be incorporated in the folktale center along with a world map. As opposites are identified in the motifs of the trickster tales, each word is posted on the wall. Word walls allow children to see in print words they are learning. It is important to use the words in daily conversations with the children.

To incorporate science into the folktale unit, students will grow grass on rocks in connection with *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*. They will observe the growth cycle of a plant, which relates to the broader science kindergarten curriculum in the spring.

All activities are designed for whole group instruction or work equally well in small group centers. Although lessons are not exclusively about opposites, two notable instructional strategies for reinforcing the concept while using the antonym flash cards are (1) The “Go Fish” game in which the object of the game is to finish with the highest numbers of opposite word pairs, and (2) Opposite Baseball in which the class is divided into two teams. The team up to “bat” must say the opposite word in order to move to the next base. A strike occurs when they get it wrong.

## Classroom Activities

### Lesson One: Introduction of the Unit: What is a Folktale?

#### *Objectives*

Students will:

- Discover that cultures around the world have folktales—traditional stories passed down through the generations;
- Understand that there are children and families around the world;
- Locate on a classroom world map places referenced in folktales;
- Discuss new words and word meanings; and
- Create a “World of Trickster Tales” folder to collect and organize unit activities.

#### *Content*

PA Standards

Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
  - F. Recall new vocabulary in listening and visual contexts.
  - H. Demonstrate reading of keywords and selected sentences and recall key concepts of the text.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre.
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Respond to and discuss a variety of literature through Read-Alouds and Shared Reading.
  - B. Describe the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation, or illustrations to express complete thoughts.
  - G. Present written work to small groups.
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening
  - B. Listen to a selection and share information and ideas.
- 1.7 Characteristics and Functions of the English Language
  - A. Recognize words from other languages as encountered.
  - B. Identify variations in dialogues.
- 1.8 Research
  - B. Locate information using visual representation and key words.

- C. Identify important concepts related to the main ideas.

Social Studies:

- Geography
  - 7.2 Physical Characteristics of Places and Regions
- Civics and Government
  - 5.2 Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship

*Materials*

Trickster tales from different cultures, pocket folders, crayons, glue, world map, paper featuring world map (see appendix), star stickers, drawing paper.

*Activity*

Begin the activity by displaying a map of the world and have children identify it as Earth. As the continents are pointed out and named, explain to children that stories come from all over the world. Stories called folktales have been handed down orally from generation to generation in all cultures from early times. They were told to teach lessons to children, to learn customs, and to explain natural events. Some are called trickster tales and can be about animals that talk and act like people. Show the students some of the books gathered from the classroom library. Together, organize the books in a corner of the room according to the country or continent from which the story came.

Distribute folders and activity paper with a map of the world. Have children color and glue the map to the cover of the folder. Explain that each time a trickster tale is read, they can place a star sticker on the map to show from where the tale comes or takes place.

Photocopy and resize the cover of the books discussed in the unit, both through lessons and examples: *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, *Raven*, *The Tortoise and the Hare*, *Leprechaun's Gold*, *The Biggest Frog in Australia*, *So say the Little Monkeys*. Invite volunteers to place the picture in the proper continent of origin.

Use a folktale from the students' reading program with which the students are already familiar from earlier lessons to illustrate the concept of folktales. For example, read *So Say the Little Monkeys*, a Brazilian folktale featured in Kindergarten Trophies Reading Program.

As each tale is read, an activity will follow. Distribute drawing paper. After each tale, have children write the title at the top of the paper and then illustrate a favorite scene from the story. Children will keep their drawings and activities in the "World of Folktales" folder. They also will place a star sticker on the map on the cover of the folder to indicate the origin of the tale.

As an extension to the lesson, invite a storyteller or community-member to class to share some folktales that were read to them as young children.

Lesson Two:  
The Tortoise and the Hare:  
Compare and Contrast

*Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Retell a known story in sequence;
- Distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, based on information from the story;
- Describe characters, setting, and main ideas of stories;
- Categorize words based on oppositional variants in the story;
- Compare and contrast the main characters by creating a Venn diagram; and
- Identify the genre animal tale.

*Content*

PA Standards

Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - D. Use self-monitoring comprehension strategies.
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Respond to and discuss a variety of literature through Read-Alouds and Shared Reading.
  - B. Describe the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.
- 1.4 Writing
  - B. Draw or write to inform.
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation, or illustrations to express complete thoughts.
  - G. Present written work to small groups.
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening
  - B. Listen to a selection and share information and ideas.
- 1.8 Research
  - B. Locate information using visual representation and key words.

- C. Identify important concepts related to the main ideas.

### *Materials*

Book: *The Tortoise and the Hare*, an Aesop Fable, adapted and illustrated by Janet Stevens, chart paper, markers, drawing paper with Venn diagram, crayons, pre-made index cards with opposite word vocabulary from the story.

### *Activity*

Display the book, the *Tortoise and the Hare*. Tell children that this is a folktale about a turtle and a rabbit, a different name for each animal. Then have children share what they know about rabbits and turtles. Next, do a picture walk. As you page through the book, ask children questions about the illustrations to elicit their thoughts about the main idea of the story. Remind children that antonyms are two different words that have opposite meaning. Explain that they are to look for opposites as the story is read.

Review antonym flash cards. Read the story aloud. As the story is read, model for children how to compare and contrast by finding opposites. For example, tortoise was friendly and quiet. Hare was flashy and rude. He did everything quickly. Tortoise did everything slow. Encourage children to point out picture details.

After reading the story, create a Venn diagram on the chart paper. Draw a hare in one circle, tortoise in another, and the two animals in the overlapping center. Ask children to compare the two by naming antonyms from the story. Record their responses on the Venn diagram. Distribute the Venn diagram sheets and markers to the students (see appendix), and they will create their own graphic organizers.

As an extension to the lesson, give one antonym flash card to each child. They will stand in a circle. Explain that they will conduct a race to find the child holding the opposite word. The first ones to find their partner are the winners. Discuss the strategies they used to find their partner. Compare to the strategy used in the race from the story: hard work and perseverance bring rewards.

## Lesson Three: Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock: Making Inferences

### *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Construct meaning to a folktale by making predictions based on information in the passage;
- Identify the main characters in the story;

- Learn decoding strategies as they build a strong vocabulary and add to their antonym word list;
- Use illustrations and portions of the story to infer and predict what happens next;
- Recognize models as useful simplifications of objects by creating moss-covered rocks; and
- Understand that change is something that happens to many things.

### *Content*

#### PA Standards

#### Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - C. Apply knowledge of the structural features of spoken and written language and the use of picture and content clues to derive meaning from text.
  - D. Use self-monitoring comprehension strategies.
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre
- 1.4 Writing
  - B. Draw or write to inform
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation or illustration to express complete thoughts.
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening
  - B. Listen to a selection and share information and ideas.

#### Science:

- 3.1a Biological Sciences: Living and Non-Living Organisms
  - 3.1a.1 Common Characteristics of Life
  - 3.1a.2 Life Cycles
  - 3.1a.9 Science as Inquiry
- 3.3a Earth and Space Sciences: Earth Structure, Processes, and Cycles
  - 3.3a.6 Unifying Themes

### *Materials*

Book: *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, retold by Eric A. Kimmel, illustrated by Janet Stevens, chart paper, markers, old nylons, dirt, wheat or grass seeds, small rubber bands, rocks, small dishes, wiggle eyes, hot glue gun, and scissors.

*Activity*

Read aloud the title of the book. Track the print and ask: “Who remembers Anansi? Where do you think this story takes place?” Show them the world map and the book cover placed on the continent of Africa. Tell children that this is a story about a trickster spider who tries to fool his friends in the jungle. Explain that this kind of story is called a fable, and a fable teaches a lesson. They should listen to the story to find out how his friends feel and predict what will happen next. Think about the lesson Anansi will learn.

Read the story. As the story is read, model for children how to make an inference to predict how the characters feel and what might happen at the end of the story. Use the illustrations to point out oppositional concepts. For example, Anansi is small; his friends are big. The rock is hard, but the moss feels soft. The characters fell down (down, up, asleep, awake). They were happy, then sad. The Little Bush Deer was shy, not outgoing. The houses were full of food, and then they were empty when the food was stolen. At the end, identify the hero and the villain.

After reading the story, make a character graphic organizer in the shape of a spider. Place Anansi in the spider’s body. Each leg will list a different character in the story. Call on volunteers to add to the spider. Discuss how the character’s felt throughout the story. Did the students predict the right ending?

As a follow-up activity, the students will create a moss-covered rock. Have each child pick a rock. Place a small amount of grass seed in the toe of the nylon. Then add dirt. Add the rock. Close the opening using a rubber band. Apply wiggly eyes with glue gun. Turn the rock over and spray with water. Place each rock in a sunny place. Students can spray their rock each day with water. Children can watch as they sprout and grow.

## Lesson Four:

## Raven: Problems and Solutions and Story Sequencing

*Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Identify the events that happen first, next, and last in a story
- Analyze the text to determine the problem and solution in the story
- Recognize the oppositional concepts in the vocabulary of the story
- Create and build a totem pole based on the sequence of the story

*Content*

PA Standards

Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently

- C. Apply knowledge of the structural features of spoken and written language and the use of picture and content clues to derive meaning from text.
- D. Use self-monitoring comprehension strategies.
- E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre
- 1.4 Writing
  - B. Draw or write to inform
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation or illustration to express complete thoughts.
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening
  - B. Listen to a selection and share information and ideas.

### *Materials*

Book: *Raven*, by Gerald McDermott, chart paper, marker, paper towel rolls, totem pole template, scissors, glue, crayons

### *Activity*

Begin the activity by displaying the book, *Raven* by Gerald McDermott. Explain to the children that Raven was a shape shifter imbued with magical powers. He is a trickster on a grand scale, mischief maker and Native American culture hero. He is their guardian spirit. To this day, Raven is a central figure in a highly stylized form on a totem pole. Expound on the events of the story calling attention to the problem (people were in darkness) and Raven provided a solution to the problem (tricked the chief into releasing the light).

Read the story. During reading, point out oppositional concepts: darkness, light, night, day, mountains, and valleys. Encourage children to discuss the problem based on their experiences of being left in the dark and what would be a possible solution. Help students to identify the solution in the story.

After the reading the story, make a totem pole graphic organizer on the chart paper. Divide it into four sections which is a characteristic of a totem pole design. Draw Raven's head in the top section. Next, invite students to illustrate in each section what happened in the beginning of the story, the middle and the end.

Tell the students they are going to make a totem pole. Totem poles may recount familiar legends, clan lineages, or notable events. Raven and his exploits are often seen on totem poles. (wikipedia) Distribute the templates. Students will illustrate and write a

sentence in each section to identify the beginning, plot and ending of the story Raven. Students will cut out their template and glue to the paper towel holder.

As an extension to the lesson, children can write and illustrate a story about being a shapeshifter. What kind of superhero? What sort of magical powers would they have?

### Lesson Five: Write a Trickster Tale

#### *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Create a trickster story web by thinking of their own character, plot, setting, beginning, middle and ending story ideas
- Design a classroom trickster tale to display in the classroom library
- Develop an awareness of the writing process

#### *Content*

PA Standards

Literacy:

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre
- 1.4 Writing
  - B. Draw or write to inform
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw, or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - C. Organize words into a complete sentence.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation or illustration to express complete thoughts.
  - E. Revise early forms of writing or illustrations to order story elements or add details.

#### *Materials*

Chart paper, marker, story web worksheets, pencils, crayons, plain drawing paper

### *Activity*

Explain to children that traditionally on April Fools Day, people play tricks on one another. This is a perfect opportunity to develop a trickster tale created and designed by the children. Tell children that together they will write a story with a trick in mind. Remind the children of some of the trickster tales they have read in class. Then ask children to brainstorm things they can do together to “trick” others. Write on chart paper a list of ideas as children respond. Have children vote to choose which idea would make the best story.

Distribute the story web worksheets. Tell the children now that they have decided on what the story is about; they need to think about who the characters will be. They can be real or make-believe. Will something exciting happen in the story? Think about how the story will end. Model for the children how to fill out the story web (see Appendix). Children will then create their own story web. End the activity by bringing the students together to share their story webs. Explain the writing process by modeling on chart paper the prewriting (story web ideas), a draft (work together to write a story), respond and revise (ways to make changes or add to), proofread (model making changes) and publish (create the class book). This process may take one to four days as needed during writing workshop time. After the story is written on chart paper, write each sentence of the story on a separate sheet of drawing paper. Give each page of the class book to one or two children. Then have them draw a picture to show what is happening. Compile the pages to make a class book. Write the title on the cover. Allow each child to write his or her name as author.

### **Annotated Bibliography/Resources**

#### *An Annotated Bibliography for Teachers*

Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantment : The Meaning and Importance of Fairytales*, New York: Random House, 1976.

Writing describes the importance of cultural heritage in child development and the effective use of literature.

Bettelheim, Bruno. “Hansel and Gretel.” *The Classic Fairytales*. Ed. Maria Tatar. New York: Norton, 1999. 273-280.

Essay talks about how young children have a difficult time learning about life, but Hansel and Gretel provides a good basis for exploring children’s deepest anxieties.

Bettelheim, Bruno. “The Struggle for Meaning.” *The Classic Fairytales*. Ed. Maria Tatar. New York: Norton, 1999. 269-273.

Essay gives a justification for using fairytales to teach.

Bredenkamp, Sue and Carol Copple. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, National Association for the Education of Young Children 1997.

A tool for early childhood professionals, this book describes developmentally appropriate practices for adults providing services to young children.

Cobb, Edith, *Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, Dallas: Spring Publications, 1993, Originally published in 1977.

Cobb's collection of autobiographies and biographies of creative people, as well as her observations of children's play, suggests that genius is shaped by the imagination of a child.

Egan, Kieran. "Young Children's Imagination and Learning: Engaging Children's Emotional Response." *Young children* 49.6 (1994): 27-32.

This report examines classic fairytales and notes the lack of attention given the role of imagination in children's learning. It discusses features of fairy stories such as structure, oppositional concepts, and emotional component, then infers four principles about young children's learning.

Geist, Eugene, and Jerry Aldridge. "The Development of Progression of Children's Oral Story Inventions." *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 29.1 (2002): 33-39.

This study indicates that children's orally told invented fairytales can be used (a) to promote cognitive development, (b) to assess cognitive development, and (c) to identify emotional conflicts that children are experiencing.

Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folk Tales and Fairytales. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group (2007).

This encyclopedia entry describes trickster tales.

Hansen, George, *The Trickster and the Paranormal*, Philadelphia: Xlibris Corp, 2001.

This book examines the sociology of the paranormal.

Schlosser, S.E. "American Folklore: Tricksters." [American Folklore](http://www.americanfolklore.net/tricksters.html) 2008 Americanfolklore.net 03 April 2010 <<http://www.americanfolklore.net/tricksters.html>>.

This encyclopedia entry describes tricksters, providing links to popular trickster tales.

"Trickster tale." [Encyclopedia Britannica](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/605010/trickster-tale). 2010. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 09 May. 2010 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/605010/trickster-tale>>.

This encyclopedia entry describes trickster tales.

Zipes, Jack, *Fairytales and the Art of Subversion*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

Looks at the ways in which writers and collectors of fairytales use traditional forms and genres to shape children's behavior, values, and relationship to society.

### **An Annotated Bibliography for Students**

Haley, Gail, *A Story a Story: An African Tale*, New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1970.  
The elderly Ananse must go through three tests of his trickery and capture difficult creatures in order to pay the price of the Sky King, Nyame, for his stories. That is how most African folk tales came to be called "Spider Stories."

McDermott, Gerald, *Anansi the Spider*, New York: Scholastic, 1993, Originally published in 1972.

In trying to determine which of his six sons to reward for saving his life, Anansi the Spider is responsible for placing the moon in the sky.

McDermott, Gerald, *Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest*, New York: Scholastic, 1993.

Raven, a Pacific Coast Indian Trickster, sets out to find the sun.

Pickney, Jerry, *Aesop's Fables*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000.

This is a collection of nearly sixty fables from Aesop, including such familiar ones as "The Grasshopper and the Ants," "The North Wind and the Sun," "Androcles and the Lion," "The Troublesome Dog," and "The Fox and the Stork."

Wildsmith, Brian, *Opposites*, New York: Starbright Books, 1997.

This is a picture book listing and displaying opposites.

### *An Annotated List of Materials for Classroom Use*

Eisenhut, Lynn. "Understanding Diversity Through Children's Books." *Catholic Library World*, 1994. This book section discusses multicultural themes in children's books, with resources of children's books that illustrate various topics.

"Enchanted Learning." 9 May 2010. <<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html>>  
A collection of over 25,000 web pages containing curriculum material.

Heiner, Heidi Anne. "SurLaLune Fairytales." 9 May 2010.

<<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com>> A diverse database of fairy tales, histories, modern interpretations, and other resources.

Peck, Russell. "The Cinderella Bibliography." 9 May 2010.  
 <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cinder/cinintr.htm>> A collection of modern works related to Cinderella, including many educational materials such as books and games.

Starfall Education. "Teach Kindergarten." 9 May 2010. <<http://www.starfall.com/n/N-info/curriculum.htm>> Curriculum resources for kindergarten reading programs, including a teacher's guide and sample lesson plans.

## **Appendix-Content Standards**

### Pennsylvania Academic Standards

#### *Literacy*

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - C. Apply knowledge of the structural features of spoken and written language and the use of picture and content clues to derive meaning from text.
  - D. Use self-monitoring comprehension strategies.
  - E. Acquire basic reading vocabulary by identifying common words.
  - F. Recall new vocabulary in listening and visual contexts.
  - H. Demonstrate reading of keywords and selected sentences and recall key concepts of the text.
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
  - C. Identify different types of genre.
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Respond to and discuss a variety of literature through Read-Alouds and Shared Reading.
  - B. Describe the characters, setting, and main idea of a story.
- 1.4 Writing
  - B. Draw or write to inform.
- 1.5 Quality of Writing
  - A. Write, draw or use pictures to depict experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.
  - B. Write words appropriate for a specific topic.
  - C. Organize words into a complete sentence.
  - D. Use a variety of words in early forms of writing, dictation or illustration to express complete thoughts.
  - E. Revise early forms of writing or illustrations to order story elements or add details.
  - G. Present written work to small groups.
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening

- B. Listen to a selection and share information and ideas.
- 1.7 Characteristics and Functions of the English Language
  - A. Recognize words from other languages as encountered.
  - B. Identify variations in dialogues.
- 1.8 Research
  - B. Locate information using visual representation and key words.
  - C. Identify important concepts related to the main ideas.

### *Science*

- 3.1a Biological Sciences: Living and Non-Living Organisms
  - 3.1a.1 Common Characteristics of Life
  - 3.1a.2 Life Cycles
  - 3.1a.9 Science as Inquiry
- 3.3a Earth and Space Sciences: Earth Structure, Processes, and Cycles
  - 3.3a.6 Unifying Themes

### *Social Studies*

- Geography
  - 7.2 Physical Characteristics of Places and Regions
- Civics and Government
  - 5.2 Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

## Appendix Antonyms in Trickster Tales

### The Tortoise and the Hare

Friendly- Rude  
 Quiet-Noisy  
 Slow- Fast  
 Work-Play  
 Nice-Mean  
 Friend-Bully  
 Hard- Soft  
 Stop-Go  
 Asleep-Awake  
 Win-Lose

### Raven

Light-Dark  
 Single-Married  
 New-Old  
 Safe-Dangerous  
 Night-Day  
 Far-Near  
 Beautiful-Ugly  
 Full-Empty  
 Bright-Dull  
 High-Low

### Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock

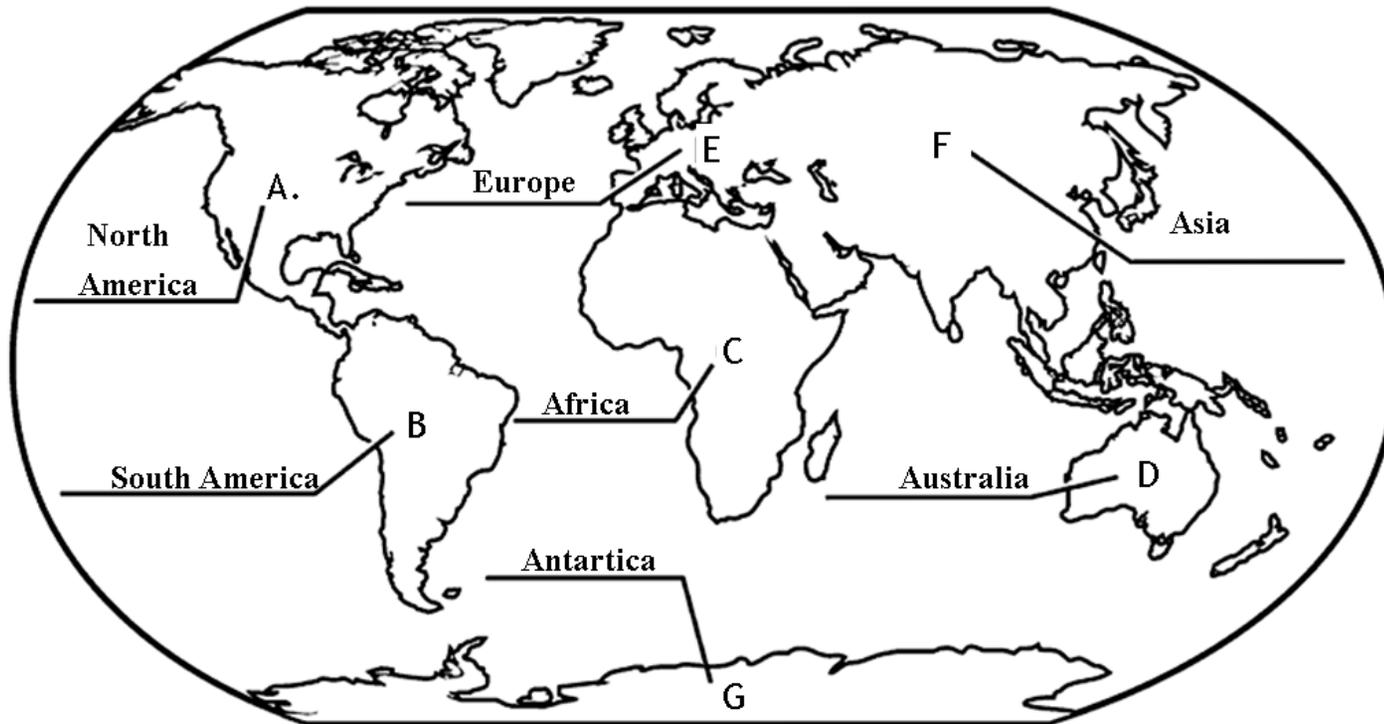
Little-Big  
 Real-Make Believe  
 Warm-Cool  
 Up-Down  
 Happy-Sad  
 Good-Bad  
 Smooth-Rough  
 Right-Wrong  
 Strong-Weak  
 Tall-Short

**Appendix Lesson One: World Map**

I can show you the places on the map where these stories came from!

A. Raven    B. So Say The Little Monkeys    C. Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock

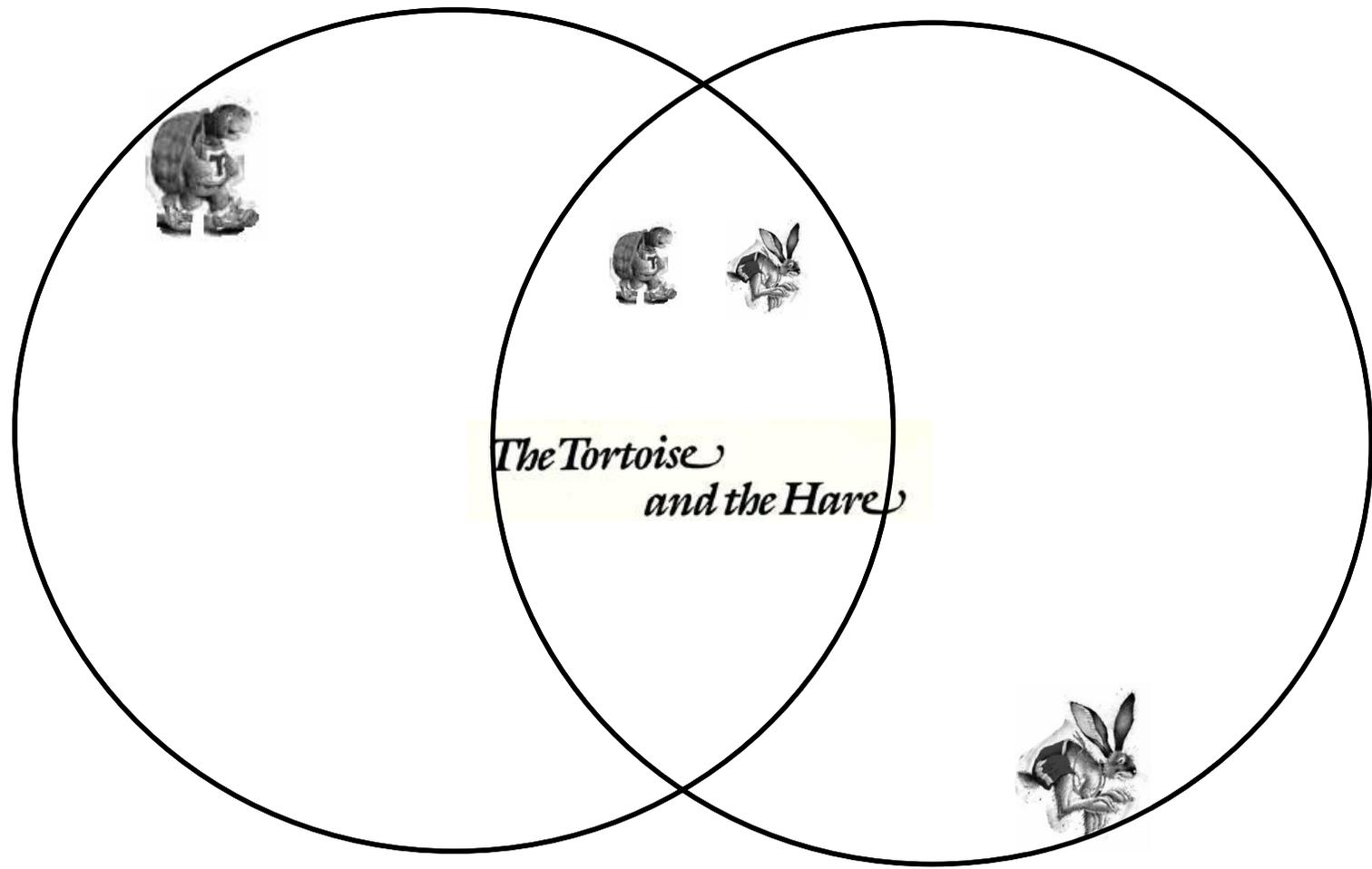
D. The Biggest Frog in Australia    E. Leprechaun's Gold, Tortoise and the Hare



My name is:

Appendix Lesson Two: Tortoise and the Hare

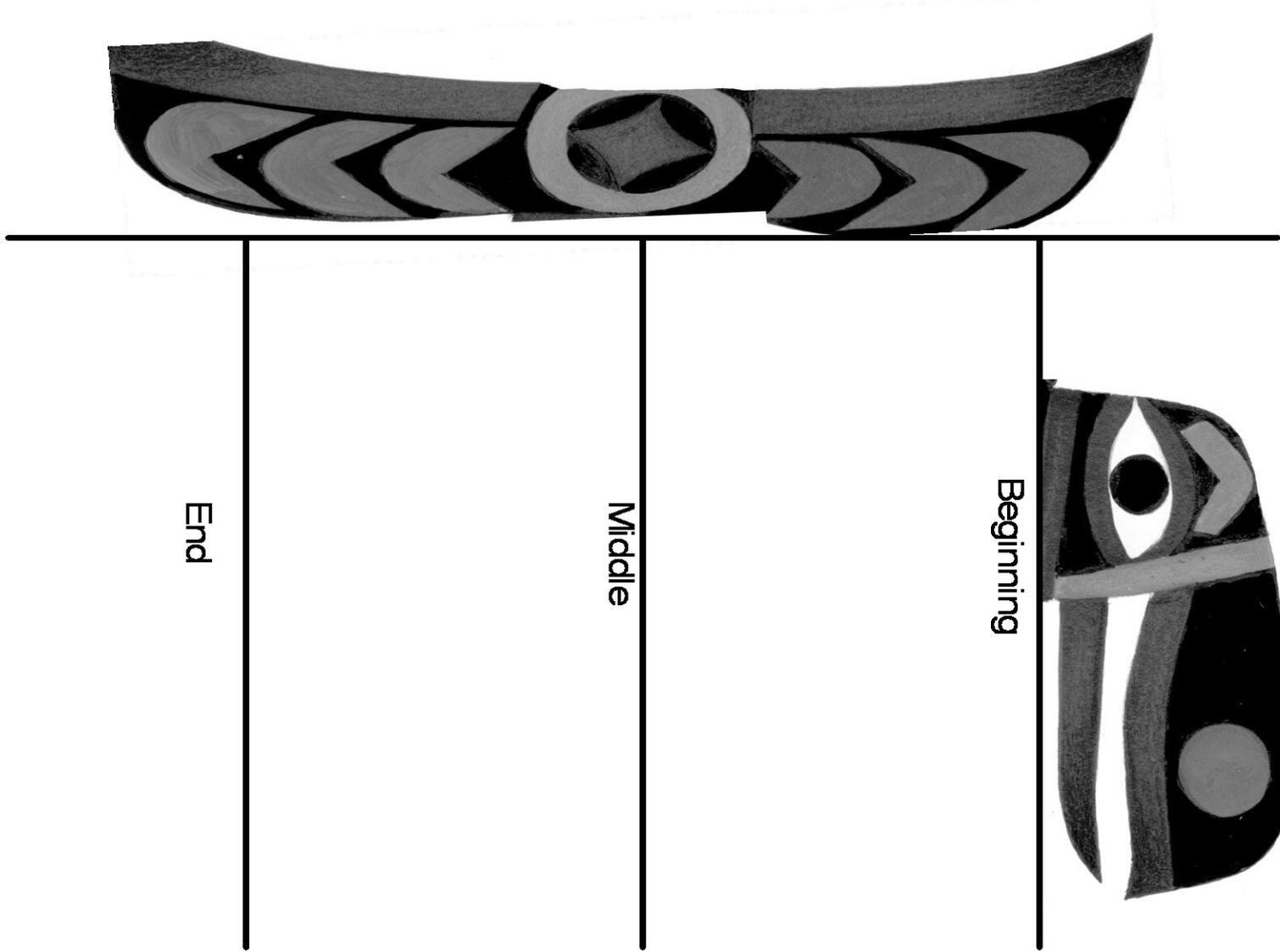
Name: \_\_\_\_\_



Compare and Contrast

Appendix Lesson Four: Raven

Totem Pole Template



**Appendix Lesson Five: Story Web for Trickster Tales**

Title of Trickster Tale: _____
Author: _____

Setting
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Main Characters
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