



Tall Tales

Content Focus: Art

- Aesthetics
- Elements of Art
- Techniques: Model-Making







Content Focus: Built Environment

- Architectural Drawing / 2D
- Form
- Model-Making / 3D
- Style

Performance Outcome(s)

- Design and build a model of a house for a character from a folk tale, myth or legend.

Standards/Interdisciplinary Connections

					
S	S	L	A	M	T
Science	Social Studies	Language Arts	Art - Visual	Math	Technology

How To Read The Symbols: The symbols in **bold** indicate the subject standards that this lesson satisfies.

Lesson Outline (multiple-lesson project)

1. Motivation And Selection Of A Folk Tale
2. The Challenge
3. Design A House For A Character From Your Folk Tale
4. Build A Model Of The House You Designed
5. Present
6. Reflect
7. Extensions And Variations
8. Middle School Standards



Lessons from the Salvadori Classrooms
LESSON TITLE: Tall Tales
PREPARED BY: Kubi Ackerman (revised by Michael Bettencourt)
TOPIC: Home
SSLAM: Home / Art / Put Together
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Salvadori Prerequisites

- FOUNDATION - BASIC SKILLS: Architectural Drawing / 2D (Activity #2); Model-Making / 3D (Activity #2)
- FOUNDATION - ARCHITECTURE 101: Form (Activity #1, Activity #4); Style (Activity #1, Activity #2)
- LESSON(S): "Façade Facelift I" (School / Art / Put Together)

CONCEPTS

- Myths, legends and folk tales provide valuable insights into cultural identity and can highlight similarities across cultures.
- Designing a house for a fictional character requires interpreting the available texts to determine the character's motivations, values and cultural background.

RESOURCES

On-Line

There is a wealth of folk tale resources online. These sites offer links to folk tales from around the world:

- <http://www.darsie.net/talesofwonder/> - Folk And Fairy Tales From Around The World
- <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html> - Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts
- <http://www.cln.org/themes/fairytales.html> - Stories, Folklore, And Fairy Tales Theme Page
- <http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/storfolk.html> - Folklore, Myth, and Legend

MATERIALS

Facilitator

- ●: Teacher Tips
- ●: Q&A

Students

- Paper, colored pencils, model-making materials of their choice.



MOTIVATION AND SELECTION OF A FOLK TALE

Think of a folk tale, legend or myth you know well and really like, one that you remember from childhood or that has special meaning for you.

- *Does this tale explain something that occurs in nature, describe a historical event, explain the origin of a people or place, or teach morals (i.e., how to act in the right way)?*
- *Would you characterize it as a folk tale, or as a legend or myth? Why? (If it involves “regular” people it is likely classed as a folk talk. If it involves supernatural or “mythical” characters it is likely classed as a legend or myth. These are not hard-and-fast distinctions, however.)*
- *What is the setting of your story? Does it take place in the distant past, or could it have taken place at any time? How do you know?*
- *What country or region does the story take place in? How do you know? Are there elements in the story that make it specific to a certain place, or could it take place anywhere?*
- *When you imagine the setting of your story, what kinds of things do you imagine? What is the landscape like? What are the people like? Are there any buildings in your setting? If so, what do they look like?*
- *If there is a main or central character in the tale you are thinking of, what is he or she (or it) like? (If there is no main or central character in the tale, the students will need to think of another tale!)*

Students jot down a list of attributes of their character. These should include what they know about the character’s trade or profession, background and personality traits. Is the character “brave,” “humble,” “easily angered?” Does the character have any interesting likes or dislikes?

- *Based on what you know about the setting for your story, what kind of house would the main character have lived in? Would it have been a hut, a castle, a temple, a tree house, or maybe some kind of magical structure that no one has ever seen yet?*

Design an entryway for this character’s house. Of course, unless the house and the door are mentioned in the tale, you probably don’t know what kind of door your character might have. But use what you know about the character to imagine what it should look like. Keep these questions in mind:

- *Should the door be large or small?*
- *What should it be made of?*
- *Should it be decorated? If so, what kind of decorations might it have? Why?*
- *Are there any aspects of the story that can be used in the design of the door?*
- *Does the door below tell you anything about what might lie beyond it?*



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Students share their sketches with their group and explain their designs.

THE CHALLENGE

- Students caucus and select one tale and character to develop a house for that character.

DESIGN A HOUSE FOR A CHARACTER FROM YOUR FOLK TALE

After you've agreed on your group's tale, design the character's house to match the doorway your colleague just drew and/or modify it with the input of the rest of the group.

Make a plan and two elevations of the house for your character.

BUILD A MODEL OF THE HOUSE YOU DESIGNED

You will now build a model of a house for your character. What materials would you like to use? How will you make your two-dimensional drawings into a three-dimensional structure?

Students determine the materials they would like to use to build a model of their house. To do so, they think about the materials that an actual house of the type they are building may have been built of, and try to come up with materials that look similar. ●: Teacher Tip

Students gather their materials and build their models. ●: Teacher Tip



PRESENT

Students present their models to the rest of the class. As they do so, they summarize the tale they worked with and explain why the story has special meaning for them or why they chose the story. They then explain their house design and how it reflects the personality of the character from the story.

REFLECT

- *Why do you think this story has survived until our present time? Did it have a special role in the culture in which it developed? If so, what was that role?*
- *Do you think that old stories such as these still have any important role in your life? Why or why not?*
- *Can you think of any “modern” stories from our own culture that have the same role as fairy tales, legends, and myths had in the past?*
- *Does the house you designed look like it would fit into the setting of the story as you imagined it? Or did you make changes along the way that led the design away from your imagination?*
- *What would you do differently next time?*

EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS

- Students find examples of fairy tales, legends or myths where houses or other buildings feature prominently in the story and make models of those structures. Possibilities include The Three Little Pigs, Hansel and Gretel, The Old Lady Who Lived in a Shoe, and Baba Yaga.
- Students write their own folk tales based on a cultural tradition that they have studied in which a house or a building is central to the story.
- Students compare and contrast the stories they have chosen to work with and discuss the similarities and differences between them. *What do these similarities and differences tell you about the values of the particular cultures and what do they tell you about human values in general?*



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MIDDLE SCHOOL STANDARDS

Social Studies

- Culture
- Global Connections

Language Arts

- Reading (E1c)
- Speaking, Listening, and Viewing (E3a, b, c)
- Literature (E5a)

Art - Visual

- Structures and Functions
- Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
- Relation to History and Cultures

Tall Tales

MOTIVATION, DISCOVERY AND DESIGN

- What is a folk tale?

A folk tale is a story, usually with a moral lesson, transmitted orally from one generation to the next. It tends to focus on “regular” people involved in everyday events that often turn extraordinary.

- What is a legend or a myth?

Legends and myths are usually set in the distant past and tend to involve major historical events or gods and other supernatural beings caught up in elemental struggles.

- Are there clear differences among the three?

There are no clear boundaries between the realms of folk tales, and legends and myths, and most stories falling under one of these categories could easily fall under the other as well.

- Why do you think people tell folk tales, legends or myths?

Folk tales, legends or myths often function as a means of explaining natural phenomena, establishing a shared sense of history and origins, and teaching a set of moral or cultural values.



DISCOVER A FOLK TALE

- Students think of a folk tale, legend or myth. If they wish, students can use the same story as they used for the motivation, but encourage each student to think of a tale that he or she has a special attachment to, such as a story that had a strong effect on the first time it was heard or a story that was told by a parent or grandparent. If they cannot think of a story with any special meaning, students can find one in a book or online on one of the websites listed in the resources.

Students may think of stories from the Brother's Grimm because of their ubiquity in the United States. Many of the Grimm stories have counterparts in other cultures that are strikingly similar and students may wish to explore these. On the other hand, students might also suggest stories from the movies, television or comic books. Is that okay with you?

- If they do not already have one, students find a written version of their story.
Finding a written version of the story is important because they will need to have a concrete text to refer to as they continue with the project and because written stories often supply more incidental detail than a simple recounting of a plot from memory. The school library and the Internet are useful resources for this task. If a student wants to use a story from an oral tradition and cannot find a written version, have the student record or transcribe the oral version of the story from a knowledgeable source.
- Students note the general setting for their stories and find examples or descriptions of the built environment for the appropriate time and place.
In many cases, folk tales, legends and myths have ambiguous settings. Students may need to research the cultural origin of the story to determine a likely setting. Many myths, such as creation myths, take place in a time before history, and students may want to look into what is known about the early stages of the culture in which the story originated. That said, it is more important that students strive for creativity and imagination rather than historical accuracy; a house from the dawn of time should be a strange and wondrous structure regardless of the cultural origins of any particular creation myth.

BUILD A MODEL OF THE HOUSE YOU DESIGNED

- Students determine the materials they would like to use to build a model of their house. To do so, they think about the materials that an actual house of the type they are building may have been built of and try to come up with materials that look similar.

Teacher Tip: If a student has designed a building that is completely imaginary and does not fit into any established type, it may be a fun challenge for him or her to use an equally unusual or unexpected material for the model. What would a house that is made out of stars or water look like as a model?

- Students gather their materials and build their models.

The simplest way for students to build their models is to make measured scale drawings of all four elevations and the roof of their house on paper or card stock, color them in, cut them out, and glue or tape them together at the edges to make a three-dimensional model. This approach, however, limits the design to a simple four-sided structure and limits the material quality of the model (though additional materials could be glued onto the paper once the sides are assembled). Another approach, suitable for curved or organic forms, is to shape chicken wire into the desired form, cut out holes for doors and windows, and cover the wire with papier-mâché. Once it dries, the papier-mâché can be painted and otherwise decorated. Encourage students to develop their own model-making approaches.