

Fables Through Comics

THEME:	LEISURE (LITERATURE)				
LANGUAGE:	ANY (GERMAN)				
STANDARD(S):	COMMUNICATION	CULTURES	CONNECTIONS	COMPARISONS	
	1.2 1.3	2.2	3.2	4.2	

Time Frame:

One or two class periods of 50 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Short target culture fables written in the target language (German samples provided)
- Sample model cartoon of the familiar fable, *The Ant and the Grasshopper* (provided)
- A piece of drawing paper for each pair of students
- Rubric for assessment (provided)

Description of Task:

Pre-reading:

Students brainstorm in English familiar examples of fables from their own culture and common characteristics of this literary genre. The teacher records students' ideas using web format. Next, the teacher displays on the overhead a well-known fable in cartoon form such as *The Ant and the Grasshopper* and basic target language vocabulary necessary for retelling this familiar fable (see sample provided). Students participate in the retelling of this familiar tale by suggesting an appropriate dialogue for each of the various story frames. The teacher records student suggestions and displays them on the overhead as a model for the upcoming activity.

Task:

The teacher divides students into pairs and distributes short target culture fables (in text format only) to the different pairs. Students read their fable

Level:

Novice-High

Purpose:

To read for information, to sequence and summarize

Communicative Function(s):

Imaginative: Recombining familiar dialogs or passages creatively

Language Structure(s):

Present tense and person/gender/number agreement

Cultural Aspects:

Folklore as mirror of cultural values and mores

Modalities:

Reading

Writing

Speaking

NOTES

together and work together to ensure comprehension. They demonstrate their comprehension by creating a cartoon version of the tale. Each pair will decide who will serve as the dialogue writer and who will illustrate. Using only their drawings and the accompanying dialogue text in the target language, students retell their fable as a comic strip.

Post-task:

Students explore and discuss in English with their fable partners possible 'morals' for their particular selection. During this conversation, students will try to think of a fable with a similar moral from their own culture. If there are none that come to mind, what might this suggest about differences between the two cultures? The teacher will facilitate a whole class discussion in which the pairs share their thoughts with their peers.

Assessment:

Both students are required to participate in the retelling of the fable. The teacher can check student participation by recording observations during pair work. In addition, comprehension of the fable will be assessed holistically by looking at the final product. The following criteria comprise the holistic rubric (example provided).

- accuracy of content
- story sequencing
- use of present tense
- subject/verb agreement
- gender and number agreement

Extensions:

Suggestions for adapting the task for various levels:

For beginning levels: Other reading selections could be used, such as scenes from a story that the students are currently reading, poetry, or short magazine articles. Students extend this activity by retelling their fable in small groups with created props and actions.

For advanced levels: Students can role play a fable, update the fable for the 90s, retell their fables using past tense narration instead of present, and/or perform their fables for beginning level language classes.

Cultural extensions:

The class can explore the use (oral vs. written delivery, typical age of audience) and significance of fables in the target culture. This could be done with a survey on the Internet or by interviewing native target culture representatives.

References and Resources:

This lesson makes use of the following authentic material: to reprint this material online permission has been requested by Houghton Mifflin Publishing. Special thanks to Xeng Vue, an ESL student at Harding High School in St. Paul, for granting permission to copy his comic strip for *The Ant and the Grasshopper*. Thanks also to Patrick Romey, ESL teacher, for securing the permission.

Copies of the German fables are from:

Hagboldt, P. (1957). *Elementary German Series, Graded Readers Books One to Five*. D.C. Heath and Company. (NTC Fable Kits)

To find this book in German, visit Amazon.de.
Website: <http://www.amazon.de>

Suggested fables in French:

Le Renard et le Corbeau - Jean de la Fontaine
Le Chêne et le Roseau - Jean de la Fontaine
La Cigale et la Fourmi - Jean de la Fontaine
Le Renard et Le Raisin - Jean de la Fontaine

To find these titles in French, visit Amazon.fr.
Website: <http://www.amazon.fr>

Suggested fables in Spanish (found in *Fabulas Españolas*):

La lechera
La compra del azno
La cigarra y la hormiga
La zora y la cigüeña

To find these titles in Spanish, visit Amazon.com.
Website: <http://www.amazon.com>

Bravo-Villasante, C. (1989). *Fabulas Españolas*. Madrid: Montena.

Reflections:

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