

African American Voices Lesson Plans

Lesson Plans: The West African Griot

Subject: Social Studies

Grade: 1

NGSSS-SS: **SS.1.A.2.1-** Understand history tells the story of people and events of other times.

SS.1.A.2.5 – Distinguish between historical fact and fiction using various sources.



Description/ Abstract of Lesson: Byway of a story telling activity, students will recognize the contributions of storytellers to the maintenance of African/African American culture.

Objective(s): Students will be able to understand how storytellers help to preserve the stories of individuals and groups in the community and beyond.

Materials:

- Information on the griot
- Book: Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters by John Steptoe
- Venn Diagram worksheet
- Construction paper
- Markers

Lesson Lead In/ Opening:

1. Open up lesson by asking students if they know what a griot is.
2. Tell students that a griot or jali (djeli in French spelling) is a West African poet, praise singer, and wandering musician, considered a repository of oral tradition. Griots live in many parts of West Africa.
3. Discuss how story tellers were important to keeping the culture. You may want to present the story of Dembo Jobarteh to show the students how griots interact with their communities:
http://home.planet.nl/~verka067/African_griot.html

Activity Outline:

1. Introduce the students to the West African tale "Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters." Explain how the story had been passed down through a long line of griots throughout the centuries.
2. Do a picture walk through the story and have the students make predictions throughout the story.
3. Write web predictions on the board. Discuss.

4. After reading the story, use a Venn diagram to compare/contrast the two daughters Manyara and Nyasha.
5. Have students copy on their own worksheet.
6. Ask students their favorite part of the story. Discuss.
7. Distribute construction paper and markers to the class. Students will write/draw about their favorite part of the story.
8. Remind students about the African griots. As an activity, whisper three sentences to one student and have them pass it along to each student in the class. Ask the last student to stand up and tell the class what was told to him/her. Discuss how stories change over time and how it was important for the story tellers to remember the smallest details of stories. Whisper three lines to another student and repeat the activity. Emphasize to the students to be more careful this time. Afterwards, discuss the results.

Assessment:

- Check Venn Diagram
- Grade favorite part of the story writing

**Additional
Web Resources:**

<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/griotimages.html>

**Recommended
Books:**

Step toe, John (1987) Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters, Amistad.

Manyara

Nyasha

