

Text Based Thematic Unit:

How Animals Play a Role in Dine Culture

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TEXT BASED THEMATIC UNIT

How Animals Play a Role in Dine Culture

Literature is Authentic

Łįishzhiin Yázhí is a translated story from an English folktale of the Black Stallion by Walter Farley. It is re-written with a culturally relevant approach by a Diné language teacher from Tuba City, Arizona, Elsie Carr. The pictures are created to reflect Diné cultural values by Baje Whitethorne, Sr.

Chííłgaii Na'niłkaad is written by a Diné author, Marjorie W. Thomas, and illustrated by Rudy Begay. They are both from Chinle, Arizona and the story is told from their Diné perspectives.

Ch'ał Tó yinílo' is written by Patricia Hruby Powell. Powell has written other extensive stories of the Diné people. She mainly focuses around cultural emergence stories and gains knowledge by traveling and working with children. Book was illustrated by Kendrick Benally from Tuba City, Arizona and is originally from BirdSprings, Arizona. He is Táchii'nii and born for Naakaii Dine'é.

Tązhii dóó Yé'iilbáhi is written by Nedra Emry, who has written other Navajo children's books. She has worked on culturally relevant reading books for young readers. It is illustrated by Verna Clinton, a teacher at Chinle Elementary School. Clinton also authored several books on Diné culture.

Literature Can Provide Memorable Contexts for the Language

All of the text chosen displays memorable content of the language through lived and historical experiences. It uses historical plot lines and characters that allows our students to be engaged emotionally and cognitively. This is done through both English and Diné languages with culturally relevant illustrations. The Navajo language that is used allows readers to experience

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the life of the characters through their eyes. The words in Navajo are authentic and brings stories to life. These stories connect the readers to lived cultural experiences.

Literature Illustrates Appropriate Language for Specific Situations

In each story there are realistic art of landscape that depicts the daily life of the Diné people. There are also abstract artwork that brings in Diné cultural knowledge that connects the stories to the illustration. The vocabulary and the structure aligns with Diné cultural stories and illustration that suits Diné children. The English text and the Navajo text are both available and can be interchanged so that a reader can understand both perspectives. A child can comprehend the story interchangeably. This allows children to move forward and back from English to Navajo while working to more advanced levels. The illustrations depict colors of low value to high vibrant colors that brings out the story visually that speaks directly to the readers.

Literature Links Students to Other Cultures and Sub-Cultures

These books allow students to understand their own ancestral cultures while at the same time they can use this knowledge to build bridges with other similar cultures. This also allows them to appreciate and value other cultures, as they learn more about their own. This gives them a sense of pride that brings in harmony and mutual respect for all life. The books allow for a development of K'é and Hózhó in each reader's lives. It gives a sense of historical knowledge, beginning with animals during the emergence to today. Students get to understand the role of animals from the emergence stories to present day and that those animals are still here today.

Literature Presents Fodder for Critical Analysis, Discussion and Writing

We want our students to learn Diné Bizaad, so the literature chosen allows for our students to infer, interpret, and explore social and political issues. For example, students can take the genres and lead them to critical analysis and reflection of the story. Further research can provide them to

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practice valuable skills such as summarizing, paraphrasing, and identifying themes of a story.

Students can give specific examples from the text and present new knowledge on their findings.

One example could be from Tązhii dóó Yé'íilbáhí, where students would identify the theme by inferring bullying happening among the animals a long time ago and use that knowledge to make a personal, to the world, and/or text to text experiences.

Literature Encourages Performance

Using these texts students are able to re-write and re-tell the stories while students act it out or do a readers theater. Using the texts provides the students many opportunities to make connections: text to self, text to world, text to text situations. Students can do choral reading, and chants. The older students can do debates, and discussions that activates critical thinking, analyzing and evaluating, inferring, and reflections.

Text Based Thematic Unit

Course: 3rd grade Dine Language
Unit Topic/Theme/Situation: How Animals Play a Role in Dine Culture
Dates: 1 week in March
Language level: Non-speakers-Beginners
Values: Students learning about their ancestral culture and incorporates traditional knowledge of animals from emergence time period to present. The students are learning about the physical and human characteristics of place and use this knowledge to understand how animals are culturally relevant. SRC R2.: Recognize and build upon the interdependency of the natural and human realms in the world around them, as reflected in their own cultural traditions and beliefs as well as those of others.
Explain how this unit is culturally appropriate: Lesson incorporates culturally relevant texts that is authentic, and includes memorable content for English and Navajo languages. It also illustrates appropriate language for specific situations it incorporates student's first culture that bridges a gap between familiar and new knowledge. The lesson includes animals that are relevant to our student's background.
Common Core Standards: Key Idea and Details CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2

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Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

Culturally Appropriate Unit Objectives:

In Navajo, students will be able to:

- ask and answer questions before, during, and after reading a text.
- Retell the story read by doing a presentation that involves visual arts, and reports.
- Identify the characters of the book by doing a character study.
- Identify what role their character played in the story.

Background Knowledge:

Navajo language is very important to the community and the school. The language identify the Dine people, where they come from and how they live. From the past to the present. The language has changed over time. Students have been learning Navajo words and exposure through cultural activities at home and at school. They receive Navajo language instruction at school on daily basis for about 45minutes to an hour a day. The Navajo teachers, consultants and most parents emphasize the Navajo language and culture. The majority of the students are familiar and exposed to the Navajo language.

Lessons

Instructional strategies: Before writing, asking questions, oral discussions, and questioning, vocabulary repetition, book walks, picture inferring, whole group and small group activities.

DAY 1: Tązhii Dóó Yé'iilbáhí

Anticipatory Set: 30 minutes

Introduce the books, and have students make predictions with shared writing by writing down student generated responses. Have students pick a book to do a book walk.

Guided Practice: 20 minutes

Teacher will read Tązhii Dóó Yé'iilbáhí to the students while pausing and showing pictures and asking questions. Observe the students, remind students to pay attention, and ask questions to help them make meaning of the story. Students will do “think, pair, share.” Review Navajo vocabulary animal names such as Tązhii, na’ashó’ii dich’ízhii, yé’iitsoh, níjiláahgo. Students will repeat the vocabulary words.

Closure: 10 minutes

Retell of the story and identify the characters for comprehension.

DAY 2: Ch’al Tó Yinílo’

Guided Practice: 20 minutes

Teacher will read Ch’al Tó Yinílo’ to the students while pausing and showing pictures and asking questions. Observe the students, remind students to pay attention, and ask questions to help them make meaning of the story. Students will do “think, pair, share.” Review Navajo vocabulary animal names such as Ch’al, ch’éeł digháhii, tsídii, ch’osh ch’éeł digháhii, Tóbaastíin, Tooh lé’étsoh, áłtsé asdzáán, áhí. Students will repeat the vocabulary words.

Independent Practice: 30 minutes

Students will choose one character from each book to do a character study on them.

Closure: 10 minutes

Review vocabularies, and story read.

DAY 3: Ch’íłgai, Na’níłkaadii

Guided Practice: 20 minutes

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Teacher will read Chííłgai, Na'niłkaadii to the students while pausing and showing pictures and asking questions. Observe the students, remind students to pay attention, and ask questions to help them make meaning of the story. Students will do “think, pair, share.” Review Navajo vocabulary animal names such lééchaą'í (Chííłgai), dibé, at'ééd, amá, tł'ízi, . Students will repeat the vocabulary words.

Independent Practice: 30 minutes

Students will choose one character from each book to do a character study on them.

Closure: 10 minutes

Review vocabularies, and story read.

DAY 4: Łííshzhiin Yázhí

Guided Practice: 20 minutes

Teacher will read Łííshzhiin Yázhí to the students while pausing and showing pictures and asking questions. Observe the students, remind students to pay attention, and ask questions to help them make meaning of the story. Students will do “think, pair, share.” Review Navajo vocabulary animal names such łíí'yázhí, Łííłchíí', ashkii, yáhátxis, dahneeshjį́, dah yishtłizh . Students will repeat the vocabulary words.

Independent Practice: 30 minutes

Students will choose one character from each book to do a character study on them.

Closure: 10 minutes

Review vocabularies, and story read.

DAY 5: Presentation day

Independent Practice:

Students present their characters and play that role while they ask and answer questions pertaining to their characters.

Extended activities:

Vocabulary walls, writing poetry, cross words etc.

Assessment

Character study presentation, and role play.

Self-evaluation on a teacher made form.

Thumbs up/thumbs down strategy

Materials

Łííshzhiin Yázhí book, Chííłgai, Na'niłkaadii book, Ch'at Tó Yinílo' book, Tązhii Dóó Yé'iiłbáhi book, butcher paper, construction paper, crayons, color pencils, scissors, glue, markers, vocabulary words, index cards, any prop that students can use for their characters.