

## Students Helping Students

# Lesson Plans



### Nepal Lesson #4: Stories of Nepal

*"From the beginning of history, human life and leadership have been centered on stories—the stories of our past, who we are today, and who we may yet become."*

*– Robert K. Cooper, Ph.D.*

#### **Overview**

This lesson explores folktales and fairy tales as a reflection of culture. Students build on their familiarity with folktales and learn about storytelling as a universal phenomenon. They read a colorfully illustrated Nepalese story, with Nepalese text shown next to the English so students can see the language and how it translates to English.

**Subjects:** Social Studies or Language Arts

**Grades:** 4-10

**Time Needed:** Two 50-minute class periods

**Materials:** Computer in classroom with projector to show slide show, maps, reference books, library books, Internet resources (found below), digital slide show, “My Own Life is Happy”

#### **Learning Goals**

- Students will learn about the cultural and social significance of folktales and fairy tales
- Students will learn about the stories of Nepal, and compare them to stories they know.

#### **Introduction**

Folktales began as an oral tradition, passed from one generation to the next. For centuries, children have been hearing these kinds of stories told around campfires and cook stoves.

In the classroom, folktales offer an excellent genre for building literacy and critical thinking. The language of these stories tends to be accessible; plots move quickly; events unfold in predictable patterns; and characters fit into familiar roles. Though the stories are simple, they offer rich and complex cultural meaning. Folktales and fairy tales offer students a window into a culture's history, geography, and values. For example, there are many versions of the Cinderella story, each reflecting a particular culture's traditional values. Every culture has folk stories or fables which explain and teach the next generation.

This lesson focuses on folktales, which typically feature “ordinary” people and everyday life. Farmers, woodsmen, villagers, and maids are common characters in folktales the world over. In many cultures, folktales are used to teach life lessons or reinforce ethical behavior.

This lesson centers around a story from Nepal. It is one of many illustrated stories published through Room to Read's Nepali Language Children's Book Publishing Program, which was developed to support literacy. In Nepal, where 70 percent of the population is illiterate, there is a great need for affordable books that cater to young people and emerging readers.

The language of Nepal is called Nepali. Nepali is the native language for 11 million people. It is an Indo-Aryan language similar to Hindi or Bengali. Nepali is written in Devanagari script. Eleven vowels and thirty-three consonants make up Nepali. The language is essentially phonetic, meaning that the pronunciation closely resembles the writing system. The script is typically written from left to right.

### **Key Concepts and Vocabulary**

- Folktale
- Fairy tale
- Tall tale
- Fable
- Storytelling
- Oral tradition
- Moral

### **Additional Resources and Learning Connections**

- Folktales and fairy tales from Nepal
  - [www.pilgrimsbooks.com/children\\_s\\_books.html](http://www.pilgrimsbooks.com/children_s_books.html)
  - <http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/guides/nepal/myst.html>
  - [http://www.dimdima.com/khazana/stories/show\\_globalstories.asp?q\\_id=149&q\\_title=Dreams&q\\_country=Nepal](http://www.dimdima.com/khazana/stories/show_globalstories.asp?q_id=149&q_title=Dreams&q_country=Nepal)
- General folktale and fairy tale resources
  - Folktale Writer's Workshop from Scholastic  
[http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mff/folktalewshop\\_index.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mff/folktalewshop_index.htm)

## Instructional Procedures

1. Introduce the subject of folktales and fairy tales with a class discussion. Ask students to name their favorite tales. Post the final list.
2. In your classroom or the school library, have students browse copies of folktales, tall tales, and fairy tales they already know (*Little Red Riding Hood*, *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Aesop's Fables*, Paul Bunyan stories), along with stories that may be new to them. Include stories from a variety of cultures and geographies (such as *The Rough-Face Girl*, a Native American tale similar to *Cinderella*).
3. As a class activity, brainstorm and list the elements of a folktale, tall tale, or fairy tale. Help students see common elements, such as: talking animals, repetition of language and events, magical events, wish fulfillment, fast-moving plot, and symbolism. Ask students to consider how these elements reflect a particular people or place. (Depending on age of students, different kinds of story analysis are possible here.)
4. Group students and ask them to come up with a definition of the “moral of a story.”
5. Next, have each group read a different tale that ends with a moral (anything from *Aesop's Fables* has a moral). Ask each group to put the moral of the story into their own words, then present to the class. End with a discussion about this question: *Why are stories used for teaching?*
6. Show the slideshow of the Nepalese story, “My Own Life is Happy.” Read the story aloud in English (or have students take turns reading aloud each paragraph). Ask students if they remember reading other stories that have similar endings.
7. In a class discussion, ask students to analyze the elements of this story. Use the list of story elements created in step 2 to prompt their brainstorming. Ask students the following:
  - a. Consider what these elements tell them about life in rural Nepal.
  - b. What are the challenges for the farmer?
  - c. What about the owner?Use the discussion to check students’ understanding of the vocabulary and events of the story.
8. Show the slideshow again, this time drawing students’ attention to the illustrations. Discuss as a class: *What more can we learn about Nepal from these illustrations? What would it be like to live here?*

9. Depending on the age of students, give a writing assignment that connects to the Nepalese story. For example: Younger students might write a sentence that tells the moral of this story and add their own illustration. Or, they could write a short “book jacket” synopsis of the Nepalese tale. Older students could rewrite the story from a different character’s point of view, or with a different ending.
10. To reinforce the oral tradition of storytelling, have students share their writing with the rest of the class in a dramatic storytelling session.

### **Suggested Extensions**

- **Celebrate Stories From Around the World**  
Have a folktales and fairy tales night at your class or school. Encourage families to read or tell a story that reflects their heritage.
- **More Stories from Nepal**  
Have students read more stories from Nepal. Older students could compare Nepali stories with folktales from other parts of the world, and write about similarities and differences. For example, *Nindra Maya*, retold by Eva Kipp Nindra, is the story of an orphan's journey from poverty to princedom. *Nindra Maya* is one of the most popular folktales from Nepal. Resources for more Nepali stories can be found in Resources above.
- **Choosing a Home**  
Ask students write a short essay from this prompt: *Country or City? As you have learned, life in rural Nepal has its rewards and challenges. Imagine you are a rural citizen in Nepal facing a hard choice, and decide: Shall I stay in the country, or move to the city? Make reference to at least three things that inform your decision to stay or go.*
- **In My Words**  
Have students rewrite a Nepali folktale in their own words. Encourage students to tell their stories aloud, or turn their story into a dramatic presentation or a short video.
- **Illustrating My Way**  
As an art extension, have students illustrate a Nepali folktale. Encourage students to explore these illustrations of Aesop’s Fables, done by art students at the University of Massachusetts: [www.umass.edu/aesop/index.php](http://www.umass.edu/aesop/index.php)

These teacher resources were developed by the [Learning Innovation and Technology Consortium \(LITC\)](#). LITC develops educational programs and materials in support of problem solving, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.