**Folktales**

**Credit to Primary Sources**

Even when books, newspapers, or computers are available, people use storytelling to share information and pass down their community's history, beliefs, and social expectations. Folktales have been passed from generation to generation. They teach children lessons or values that are important to the success of a community or country. Often, the main characters of folktales are animals instead of people. When used to answer questions about the time or place in which they were written, folktales can serve as accessible primary sources, especially for elementary students. Folktales can also be used as secondary sources when they are used to provide us with an interpretation of past events.

Storytelling and folktales have always been and are very important in all world cultures—our own as well as those of Africa. These stories help people remember their histories and pass down their traditions. Folktales are still important across Africa today. Many have been recorded in writing or film, but they are also told aloud during special occasions and everyday circumstances like bedtime stories. Storytellers are a link to and a reminder of the values on which African communities were built and for which many African leaders strive.

The following folktale, "The Jackal and the Leopard," comes from Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the Horn of Africa, in the northeast corner of the continent. Ethiopia is part of what was once the great power known as Abyssinia and has long been an independent nation. This folktale underscores the importance of honesty, fairness, wisdom, and courage as qualities that are essential for creating stable communities and governments everywhere in the world. The animals featured in this story were once found throughout most of Africa.

**Background Terms**

* Ancestor: Someone from the past to whom you are related
* Culture: The customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group
* Ethiopia: A country in Northeast Africa
* Folktale: A story spread by word of mouth in which the main characters are often animals
* Generation: All the people living at the same time who are all about the same age
* Moral: A value or idea of right and wrong
* Abyssinia: A large kingdom that existed from 980 BCE until the 20th century. It was the oldest state in the world, and the only part of Africa not to be colonized by European powers during the 19th century. The modern day country of Ethiopia finds its historical and geographic roots in Abyssinia.

**Folktale Terms**

* Baboon: A large African monkey often portrayed as being wise or treacherous in folktales
* Envious: Jealous
* Gazelle: A small, fast antelope found native to Africa and Asia
* Heron: A bird with a long neck, a long beak, and long legs that often stands in water and searches for food
* Hyena: A fierce predator and scavenger found in Africa and parts of Asia
* Jackal: A dog-like animal found in Africa; smaller than a wolf
* Leopard: A large member of the cat family found in Africa and Asia; usually has tan fur with black and white spots

**Key Questions**

1.  What is a *moral*?

2.  What is the *moral* of The Jackal and the Leopard?

3.  What are some of the values in the folktale, and why might they be important in Ethiopia?

**Pre-learning Activity**

1. Ask students to sit on the floor in a circle. Tell them the story of The Tortoise and the Hare.

* Text available at <http://childhoodreading.com/?p=3>
* Walt Disney Video available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DrKmpuKhKE>

2. After reading, lead the students in a discussion of the following questions:

* What does the word moral (as a noun) mean? What is the moral of The Tortoise and the Hare?
* What does The Tortoise and the Hare tell us about the values of the people and culture who tell this story?
* Why is storytelling an effective way to teach lessons?

**Primary Source Activity**

Materials

1. Projected images of animals. Images of animals can be found at:

* Leopard: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Leopard_africa.jpg>
* Jackal: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Canis_simensis_-Simien_Mountains,_Ethiopia-8.jpg>
* Hyena: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spotted_Hyena,_Ngorongoro.jpg>
* Gazelle: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gazella_rufifrons_AB.jpg>
* Baboon: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Papio_hamadryas_%28aka%29.jpg>

1. The Jackal and the Leopard Document
2. Ethiopia Fact Sheet
3. Drawing/scrap paper, art supplies

Procedure

Write the title The Jackal and the Leopard on the board. Display images of a leopard, jackal, hyena, gazelle, and baboon on board or projector. Ask students to examine title and images before leading them in a discussion of the following pre-reading questions:

* What do you think this story is going to be about?
* What do you know about leopards and/or jackals? Based on the pictures, what can you guess about them?

Read The Jackal and the Leopard aloud to the students, or ask the students to read the story in small groups.

Ask students the following questions based on the story:

* What is the lesson or moral this story teaches? What evidence do you have to support your answer?
* Why do you think the Gazelle and the Hyena are scared of the Leopard?
* Can you relate to either the Jackal or the Leopard?
* Can you make a connection between any of the characters in this story and characters from other stories or movies?
* What are some of the values that are important in the story? (i.e., honesty, fairness, wisdom, courage, etc.). Record the values described on the board or chart paper.

Provide students with an Ethiopia Fact Sheet and ask them to read the information, or share the information with them in your own words. Then lead the students in a discussion of the following questions related to the provided facts:

* What has happened in Ethiopia when people have not been
* Honest?
* fair?
* brave?
* wise?

Why might parents, teachers, and other leaders want children to learn these values? Are stories a good way to teach values? Can students remember learning values or morals from other stories?

Ask students to work in pairs to create their own story.

They can create a book cover for their story and share it with the class.

**Common Core Connections**

* Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
* Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
* Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
* Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively