

How to Build Curriculum Around a Story

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Because students are engaged by the world of story, they want to know more. They feel as if they know the characters and places. They will ask questions, especially if you encourage them to, which will give meaning and purpose to the activities that follow the story. We have included ideas for curriculum tie-ins for the story "The Blind Men and the Elephant," a folktale from India. These ideas are for many grade levels; choose the ones that are appropriate for your students.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Listening and Speaking Skills:

- * Go over the sequence of events in the story; draw a story map
- * Retell the story in a circle with each student saying a sentence
- * Have students discuss the main points or theme of the story
- * Tell the story as if it's a news report
- * Have students conduct interviews of the characters in the story
- * Have students tell the story from one character's point of view

READING SKILLS

- * Read the story over and over to help with the retelling process
- * Read other versions of the story
- * Read other stories from India
- * Read stories with a similar theme

WRITING SKILLS

- * Have students write the story in their own words; they can also illustrate and publish their versions
- * Write a different story with the same theme
- * Write a different story with the same characters
- * Write the story in the form of a poem or play
- * Keep a journal including reactions to the story and activities
- * Write a letter to a character(s) in the story

CHARACTER EDUCATION

- * Use as a Conflict Resolution Tool to demonstrate the importance of listening to other viewpoints
- * Discuss the story to reinforce values such as the importance of working together
- * Discuss the importance of the sensitivity to physical disabilities

SOCIAL STUDIES

- * Study the history, people, geography, and culture of India
- * Show slides and photos, describe traditions and customs, and serve ethnic dishes of India
- * Look for current news articles about India; display them on a bulletin board
- * Find India on a map; check the latitude and longitude

MATHEMATICS

- * Pretend to take a trip through India; have students add the miles from one place to another

- * Make up word problems with characters from the story. (For example: If a man weighed two hundred pounds and an elephant weighed six tons, how many times larger is the elephant than the man? OR If it took the men three days to walk the forty-five miles to the Rajah's palace, how many miles did they travel in a day?)

SCIENCE

- * Discussion of the five senses
- * Study the characteristics and habitat of the elephant
- * Teach the scientific method:
 - (1) Have the students ask any questions that the story brought to mind
 - (2) Define one problem the class chooses to investigate
 - (3) Discuss possible answers to the problem (hypotheses)
 - (4) Discuss ways to test the hypotheses (experiments, research)

ART

- * Have students draw a storyboard for the story
- * Have students draw a favorite scene from the story; students can then put them in the proper sequence
- * Create a quilt (made with paper) that includes various scenes from the story
- * Create puppets, props, costumes, or scenery to put on a play of the story
- * Make a diorama
- * Create paper dolls for retelling the story

MUSIC

- * Write the story in the form of a song or rap and perform for the class
- * Rewrite the story as a musical play
- * Play recordings of indigenous music of India as students do artwork or other activities
- * Make musical instruments to use while telling the story

DRAMA

- * Act out the story as a play or Readers' Theater
- * Create a puppet show of the story