Unit 2 /Week 2

Title: Folk Tales from Asia

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.4, RL.5.9, RL.5.10; RF.5.3, RF.5.4; W.5.1, W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.9; SL.5.1, SL.5.6; L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.4, L.5.5, L.5.6

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Folk tales have a universal theme - they describe what all people have in common: We all have strengths and weaknesses. These tales all demonstrate how it takes the strengths of many to accomplish goals and make a difference. We can all learn from the struggles and successes of others, and folktales have been used for centuries to teach the values and customs of a culture to children.

Synopsis

The three folk tales are from Asia (Vietnam, Thailand, and China). *How the Moon Became Ivory* explains how the sun and moon came to light the Earth. The sun watched over the people during the day and the moon at night. But the moon shone as brightly as the sun so the people continued working, couldn’t sleep, and were very hot. Finally, their mother (Tay Vuong Mau, Queen Mother of the West) suggested that the moon put ashes on her face to make a soft, ivory light. Although the moon was saddened by this, the people rejoiced and loved her even more. The tale *Who is Best?* is about Boon, Man, and Panya who are characters who represent merit, diligence, and wisdom. They work together to clear a farmer’s land to make room for rice fields. They have seven days to finish. On the final day, they begin arguing about whose name is better. They waited for food from the farmer on the seventh day, which didn’t come. They used their respective traits to decide which is best. The farmer reminds them that each quality is important and that each quality is needed to be successful and prosperous. In *Virtue Goes to Town*, the character (Virtue) wants an adventurous life and sets out to find a job in town. He is impatient and brags about his strengths but eventually earns a job as a cook. He takes care of the laborers by preparing cleaning water and food to eat while they work all day. One day he is impatient and eats all of their rice. In exchange, he offered to do all of their work. The foreman realizes that although Virtue bragged about his capabilities, he really could do everything he said – and more. He convinces the foreman to keep him on, working in the fields, but also to keep the other 20 men as cooks. Virtue makes friends because of his warm heart and down-to-earth ways, but he makes enemies as well because of his bragging and great self-confidence.

All three folk tales highlight the balance between human faults of vanity, greed, and impatience and the human virtues of sacrifice, giving, patience, and hard work.

1. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary. The teacher will determine whether to read and discuss each folk tale separately and then engage in a culminating discussion or to treat the three folk tales as one selection.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along.

(Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)

1. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text Dependent Questions** | **Answers** |
| *How the Moon Became Ivory* from Sky Legends of Vietnam | |
| What job did the Jade Emperor entrust to his eldest and brightest daughter? Who or what does the eldest daughter represent? | She was to oversee the earth. “You will give them light and warmth so they can take care of their farms.” She represents the sun. |
| What is the difference between the winter bearers and the summer bearers, and how they do their jobs? | The winter bearers are strong and muscular. They quickly carry the sun across the sky. The summer bearers are older (gray-bearded) and tired. They move more slowly (plodded) and arrived late in the west.  The teacher may need to help students understand that this is an explanation of how the days are shorter in the winter and longer in the summer. |
| Why did the Jade Emperor call his second daughter, the moon, to him, and what job did he give her? | The days were long and the people had plenty of time to work on their crops and harvest the food, but the nights were dark and no light brightened the travelers’ way. Her job was to watch over the earth at night. |
| What words and phrases from the folk tale let you know what the moon did to get ready for her job? Why did she do this? | She scrubbed and polished her face until it shone as brightly as her sister’s, the sun. She chose her brightest gems to wear. She trimmed every lamp so the windows blazed with light. She wanted to be as bright as her sister to watch over the people. |
| What was the result for the farmers on the earth when the night was as bright as the day? | The farmers had worked hard during the day, but when the night was just as bright they went back to the fields to work. They were exhausted and went home to try and sleep, but couldn’t because the moonlight shone so brightly in their windows. The people grew more weary each day and longed for the breezes that used to comfort them at night. |
| Why does the sun say, “Humans are not like us, they need a time to rest”? | Because the sun watched over the earth during the day, she could see that her sister’s light was just as bright at night as hers was during the day. Because the night was still bright, the people kept working. The people needed it to become darker at night so they could tell it was time to rest and get ready for the next day. |
| Why does the sun glare at her sister and say, “How could you be so proud and selfish?” | The sun believed that her sister, the moon, wanted to be like her and was only thinking of herself when she tried to shine as brightly as the sun. The sun believed her sister was vain and did not think of the people when shining so brightly. |
| What does it mean when the mother says, “Now your face will shine with a soft, ivory light. The people will love you, even more than they love your sister”? | If the moon covers her face with ashes, her light will be softened and not as bright. The people will love her because they are exhausted and need to rest at night. They need something different from her than what they get from her sister, the sun, during the daytime. Her father says she will help the people know the time of the month to plant their crops because on the fourteenth day of each month the people will see a full moon.  Teacher may want to explain that this represents the phases of the moon. The path of the sun shows passing of the seasons while the phases of the moon show the shorter passing of a month. |
| How does the moon know that the people loved her new face? | “Shouts filled the air. The people were singing and cheering her!” |
| Folk tales often teach a lesson or moral. What lesson might we learn from the moon in this story? | We do not all have to shine with the same brightness. We all have jobs and responsibilities, and they do not have to be accomplished in the same bright manner. When we understand that we do not need to be exactly the same, we can work better together. |
| *Who is Best?* From Thai Tales: Folktales of Thailand | |
| The main characters in this folk tale represent three character traits. What are they? Why were they able to accomplish the task (clear land for more rice fields) in seven days?  The teacher may need to teach these character traits. Knowing these characteristics is critical to understanding the plot. | Boon represents merit (worth), Man represents diligence (persistence), and Panya represents wisdom (insight or understanding).  Inference: Maybe they worked together to accomplish the task – and they worked hard. |
| The text says, “While they waited they began to **boast** among themselves about their names.” What does boast mean and what are they boasting about? | Boast means to speak with pride or think you are better than someone else. They are boasting (bragging) that their character trait is better than one of the others. |
| How does each man’s character trait help the three to find the food and eventually the gold? | Panya (wisdom) walked around looking for food and saw a trail of ants. Each ant was carrying a single grain of rice and he realized that the rich man had his servant hide the food, instead of giving it to them like he did the last six days. He tells Mr. Man (diligence) to look for the food. Mr. Man finds it and the two eat until they are full. They say that Boon (merit) won’t need food because someone will bring him food because of his previous good deeds. When they are full, they toss the rest of the food to Boon. Boon finds gold pieces at the bottom of the food packet. |
| Each character in the folk tale presents an argument for why only he deserves the gold. What does he say to convince the others? Support your argument by explaining what event caused (the cause) another to occur (the effect). | They all want the gold for themselves.  Panya told the others, “If it had not been for my wisdom, we would not have known the food was hidden.” Panya is pointing out that he was the one who had noticed the trail of ants carrying food (cause), which in turn lead him to believe that the food was somewhere nearby, but hidden (effect). If Panya hadn’t realized the food was hidden somewhere, the three wouldn’t have looked for it, so the gold would never have been discovered.  Man argued, “If it had not been for my diligence, we would not have found the hidden food.” Man is telling the others that he was the one who didn’t give up and kept looking for the food. Because he was so persistent (cause), he was able to find the food (effect). Since the gold was hidden at the bottom of the food, Man believes he deserves to keep it. If Man had not found the food, the gold would never have been found (another effect).  Boon tries to convince the others that he was the one who really deserved the gold. He told the others, “You two still lack boon. Good deeds bring good in return. As you lack merit, you threw your gold away with the good scraps. You cannot say that his gold belongs to you. What is thrown away is no longer yours.” Boon is explaining to the others that they were selfish by not sharing the food with him in the first place. Panya and Man did not share the food until they had eaten everything they wanted and were full. Only then did they throw Boon the leftovers (cause). Since Panya and Man had thrown out the food, Boon didn’t think they should get to keep the gold that he found when he finished eating the leftover food (effect). |
| What evidence in the text shows why the rich farmer decides to give each character an equal amount of the gold? | “Each of you is equally important. No one alone is sufficient. All three are needed. In order to succeed and prosper, a man must have all three of your qualities: merit, diligence, and wisdom.” |
| Folk tales often teach a lesson or moral. What lesson might we learn from the characters in this story? | It is important to build many good qualities in your character. If you want to be successful you will need merit, diligence, and wisdom. Good qualities work together to build a person’s character. |
| *Virtue Goes to Town:* A Chinese folk tale from The Rainbow People | |
| The title of this folk tale is *Virtue Goes to Town*. In this story, as in the last one, the character in the story is really an idea or character trait. **Virtue** is an admirable quality that means to be true and honorable. What evidence indicates that Virtue may not be the correct name for this character? | He asked a group of people if they were practicing to be a fence. He used a loud voice and was a pest when he said he left the farm to get rich. He was impatient when he got in line and asked if they “…could go any faster.” |
| **Destiny** means things that will happen in the future that can’t be changed or controlled. What does the wise woman ask Virtue in order to help him determine his destiny? Because he decides to go the city, what does that mean will probably be his destiny? | She asks if he would like a quiet, happy life as a farmer or a life of sorrow and glory.  If the wise woman is correct, Virtue can expect to find both sorrow and glory in his life because he chose the city. |
| Why do the men in town seem to dislike Virtue? | He bragged and yelled, “We’re not getting any younger” as he waited in line. Because the foreman didn’t respond Virtue said he must be deaf. He pushed his way to the front of the line and bragged about his physical strength when he said he could out plow a water buffalo and that no job was too hard for him. |
| What does it mean when Virtue says, “I could cook a whale and fricassee (cook meat in its own sauce) a dragon? How does the foreman feel about Virtue? | Virtue is saying that no job is too big for him. He can cook a whale and dragon.  (Teacher may want to talk about hyperbole (exaggeration) in text. This is a point where the author is showing how “strong” virtue is – it also adds an element of humor. )  The foreman grunts at him and says how things are done. He twiddles his thumbs and hires him despite wanting to turn him away. Inference: He doesn’t like him very much. |
| What did Virtue do to show that he was trying to be cheerful and friendly? | He tried to be pleasant to each man. He said, “Smile, friend,” “We’re keeping farm hours now-not town hours,” “We’re all in this together,” and “Teamwork.” He did not give up easily and believed they would come around and like him when they got to know him. |
| What evidence shows that Virtue wasn’t bragging, but being truthful about his physical strength? | He picked up two cauldrons, one in each hand, that were so big they could have held six men. He carried them to the river for water and back. “He lifted them out of the water like they were cups.” |
| Why did Virtue eat all the rice? | Virtue was getting hungry waiting for the workers, who were late. He ate two small bowls and then began to feel sorry for himself. He said, “I do my job, but no one appreciates me. I’ll show them.” He also said the rice was going to burn and he didn’t want it to go to waste. He was also bored. |
| What additional feats does Virtue accomplish by himself and why does he do them? | He worked in the field with the foreman, chopped all the wood, and carried the water. He has done more work than the foreman expected. Virtue did this because he is embarrassed that he has eaten all of the rice so he says he will do the work of 20 men and they can do the cooking. |
| What does Virtue mean when he says that the one pot of water won’t “wash a cat’s tail” and the rice “wouldn’t even feed a mouse?” | Virtue says that “He is doing the work of twenty men and has the hunger of twenty men.” He is telling them they have not cooked enough food nor have they prepared enough hot water to wash in. |
| What does it mean when it says,  “But Virtue had learned a few things since he had left the farm. He winked at the rest of the crew. ‘We’re all a team…You’re not going to fire them, are you?’” | Virtue thinks that the foreman is going to fire the men because he (Virtue) can do the work of all 20 of them. The foreman thinks that he will only have to pay for one man’s labor. Virtue has learned to stand up for his friends. |
| What does it mean when one of the crew says, “No one will ever mistake you for a modest man, but your heart’s in the right place?” | The crew has learned that he wasn’t just bragging, because he could do the work of 20 men. Virtue was telling the truth even though the “bragging” bothered all of them. |
| What does the author mean when he says that Virtue “…never lost his talent for making friends…or enemies.”? | Virtue went on to become a mighty warrior and general, but he must have continued to brag about his abilities because it says that he made friends and enemies. He must have continued to be a pest to some people and as they got to know him better some of them became his friends. |
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| What are some of the reasons that people from all over the world tell folk tales? What does the author mean when he says, “…but their messages are universal”? | Folk tales have a universal theme, they describe what all people have in common: we all live under the same sun and moon, we all wonder how to lead a good life, and we all, sometimes, have to put up with other people’s faults. |

Vocabulary

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|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING**  Words addressed with a question or task | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING**  General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION**  not enough contextual clues provided in the text | boast, merit, diligence, wisdom  virtue, destiny  fricassee | common  horizon, humankind  neglected, bewildered, shame  ashes, satin  famine, accomplish  prosper, diligently, previous  gratefully, promptly, sufficient  glory, impatient  palanquin, bearers  trimmed every light  heavenly bear |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | Universal  entrusted  weary  qualities | Emperor, plodded, muscular, assured, bountiful  exhausted, scene, hovered  watchman, patrol  quarreled  ignored  cauldron  warrior, general |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

One aspect that these folk tales have in common is the characters represent ideas rather than real people. Look back at each of the folk tales. What lesson or moral does each of these folk tales have in common?

Answer:In each of these folk tales, there is a theme that it takes strengths from different people to accomplish goals. In *How the Moon Became Ivory*, Moon learned that her talents were different from her sister’s, but just as important. She realized that by shining a softer light, it allowed people the rest they needed at night to be more productive during the day. Her softer light signaled a time for rest. In *Who is the Best,* Boon, Man, and Panya each had a different virtue (merit, diligence, and wisdom) which allowed them to be successful in some way. Panya used wisdom to determine that food was hidden from them. Man used his diligence to find the food, and Boon attributed his finding the gold to the fact that he had merit. In reality, each of the characters had to use their unique strength in combination with each other to be successful (each of them played a role in finding the gold). Finally, in *Virtue Goes to Town*, Virtue, though a braggart, uses his strength to accomplish many tasks independently. His hard work, strength, and warm heart win the admiration of many when he encouraged the foreman to let the men work as a team. The characters in each of the folk tales discovered they could use their strengths to accomplish many things.

Additional Tasks

* Folktales are meant to teach the customs and values of a culture to children in an enjoyable way, with a story that they will remember. Which folk tale teaches the lesson best? Use evidence from each of the texts to support your written opinion.
* Think about someone you admire, either someone you know, someone famous, or a character in a book or story who has one of the character traits described in the folk tales. How does the character trait affect how they behave? Does it make them someone to look up to? Why?

Answer: Answers may vary.

* Read folktales from another culture (Africa, America, Mexico, etc.) and find one similar to one of the three folktales from Asia. (Many cultures have folktales involving the sun and the moon, for example.) How are the two tales the same and different? What is the lesson in each folktale? Use evidence from both texts.

Answer: Answers will vary.

Note to Teacher

* The questions are designed to not only guide students through the story sequentially, but also to build up to the culminating activity.
* The teacher might want to build up the vocabulary beforehand, especially the character traits, as they are critical to understanding the plots of the folk tales. Words such as merit, wisdom, diligence, and virtue are examples.
* The teacher might also explain that in the first tale, the author is using a story to explain the path of the sun through the sky (length of days throughout the year), and the phases of the moon.
* The teacher might want to replace or enhance this selection with informational text.
* The teacher may want to talk about hyperbole (exaggeration) in text. This is a point where the author is showing how “strong” virtue is – it also adds an element of humor.