

ART from the PAST

PROJECTS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

Telling Stories

People of long ago devised their own ways to pass on important stories. Since few could read or write, they used pictures & storytelling to pass on lively tales through generations. Stories told of a clan's past, shared myths & spiritual beliefs, taught important lessons & remembered national heroes.

East Indian Storytellers

Long ago in India, storytellers used puppet shows, colorful story cloths & story boxes. These traditions continue today. In Indian villages, artists painted stories of gods, kings, honor & heroism. Storytellers walked from place to place entertaining, teaching, & telling their stories using these props & pictures:

Wooden story boxes (Kavad) have vividly painted door panels that unfold to show illustrations while the storyteller speaks.

- ◆ Fold heavy cardstock as shown to make doors. Fill the insides with photos or drawings that tell a story.



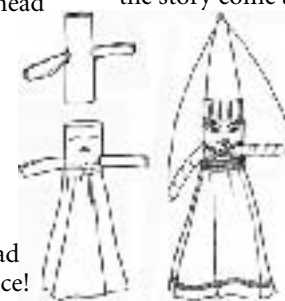
Storyteller's Portable Shrine
Rajasthan, India
Wood, paint
Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (9-11105)
Photo by M. Lee Fetherree



Puppets, India

String puppets act out favorite stories & legends. They have carved wooden heads, stuffed cloth bodies & long skirts. A string attached to head & hands allows the puppeteer to move the puppets skillfully.

- ◆ Put a roll of fabric through side holes in paper tube for arms & body. Attach cloth or small paper bag for skirt.
- ◆ Criss-cross ribbon at chest. Paint face. Attach string to head & hands. Let your puppet dance!



Lipundja, *Dancing Man*, 1963; Milngimbi, Australia
Earth pigments on bark, 19" x 8"; Songlines Gallery

Australian Dreamtime

Australian Aboriginal storytellers tell tales & paint pictures of the Dreamtime, a time before memory when all things came into being. Artwork on rock, bark & canvas continues a 4,000-year-old tradition preserving creation stories & spiritual beliefs.

- ◆ Admire aboriginal art: www.aboriginal-art.com
- ◆ Illustrate a very old story you've been told but never experienced.
- ◆ Use white paint lines on dark paper. Include many details to make the story come alive.



Storycloths (Phada) are large folk paintings on cloth showing a hero's deeds. Border scenes surround the central picture.

- ◆ Visit local museums now exhibiting India's storytelling arts: The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, www.asianart.org & The Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley, www.hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/exhibitions
- ◆ Draw a storycloth of a favorite story on different sections of a paper.

Ancient Scribes

In ancient cultures few knew how to read & write. Scribes learned the intricate alphabets of their land to keep documents, send messages & write histories.

- ◆ Explore ancient scripts from several cultures. Design your own alphabet with a friend & use it to send secret stories & messages to each other.

Look in the Mercury News

Newspapers are in the business of telling stories. What different kinds of stories can you find?

Search the San Jose Mercury News for pictures that tell a story. How do they convey their message?

MANY THANKS TO:
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco;
Library of Congress; Metropolitan Museum of Art;
Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley;
Songlines Gallery, San Francisco



Fable of Crane and Peacock (German), Augsburg, ca. 1497; Illustration in Aesopus, Vita et fabulae
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, cph.3b06067

Aesop's Fables

Aesop, a slave in Ancient Greece, wrote short fables that taught important truths. His animal characters behaved like humans. The stories were told for hundreds of years before being written down. During Medieval times they appeared in printed books of many cultures.

- ◆ Write a fable that teaches a lesson using animals as characters.
- ◆ Illustrate it with descriptive lines & colors.
- ◆ Collect & bind stories into a book.

Information & activities created for teachers, parents & kids by:
COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND ARTS (CSMA) AT FINN CENTER
230 San Antonio Circle, Mountain View, CA 94040 | 650.917.6800 | www.arts4all.org
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