

Turkish Delights: Hodja Tales

Students get a glimpse of Turkey’s culture by reading tales from Nasreddin Hodja, Turkish and Middle Eastern folk philosopher.

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Grade Level	3
Duration	2 class periods

National Geography Standards

ELEMENT ONE: THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

2. How to Use Mental Maps to Organize Information About People, Places, and Environments in a Spatial Context

ELEMENT TWO: PLACES AND REGIONS

4. The Physical and Human Characteristics of Places

Arizona Geography Strand

Concept 2 Places and Regions

PO 1 Locate major physical and human features from content studied (e.g., Greece, Canada, Spain, United State) on maps and globes.

Concept 4 Human Systems

PO 4 Describe elements of culture of a community or nation (e.g., food, clothing, housing, sports, customs, beliefs) in areas studied.

Other Arizona Standards

ELA Common Core Standards

Reading

Key Ideas and Details

3.RL.2 Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

Writing

Research to Build and Present

Knowledge

3.W.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

Overview

Learning about other places encourages students’ understanding of cultures other than their own, and this helps to enlarge students’ mental maps of the world. Knowing about other countries also enriches students’ own self-identities as they come to appreciate similarities and differences. Folk tales can offer younger students an entry point into understanding another culture.

Purpose

In this lesson, students will learn about the Turkish culture as they read some of the tales of the Turkish folklore philosopher and jokester, Nasreddin Hodja.

Materials

- Handout 1, image of Nasreddin Hodja
- Handout 2, Nasreddin Hodja Tales, can be Xeroxed and cut apart for partner reading

- Teacher copy of *The Hungry Coat* by Demi
- Handout 3, Writing Assignment and Grading Rubric
- Globe or wall map
- Outline maps of Europe and Mediterranean Regions
- Handout 4, Locate these countries with Hodja Tales on your map
- World Map

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. locate the United States and Turkey on a world map
2. locate other countries which also have Hodja tales
3. read examples of Hodja tales
4. retell their favorite Hodja tale, including key details

Procedures

SESSION ONE

1. Begin by reminding students of folktales they might have read. (American examples might be the tales of Brer Rabbit, Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, Davy Crockett) Give a basic definition of folk tales: stories or legends handed down from generation to generation usually by oral retelling. These tales usually explain something that happens in nature or they tell us a certain truth about life. Countries around the world all have their own folktales, and when we read them, we can learn about another country and what is important to the people there.

2. Show students a world map or globe; ask students to locate the United States. Then show them where Turkey is located. Ask several students to come to the map to reinforce the location of both the United States and Turkey.

Note: Students might make a connection between the Thanksgiving bird and the country of Turkey. The African guinea fowl made its way to English

dinner plates about four hundred years ago. Although its origins were in Africa, it had been imported to Turkey before being brought to western Europe. The English called it the turkey-cock. Later, when the English came to North America, they saw a native bird and assumed it was the same as their turkey-cock, and called the American bird a turkey.

3. Introduce Nasreddin Hodja (often referred to simply as "Hodja," pronounced *ho-ja.*) by showing the image from Student Handout 1. Point out to students that Hodja lived many centuries ago, and the way he is dressed is traditional for the region and the times. Hodja is always depicted wearing a huge turban and with a long white beard. Today, Turkey is a modern country. Point out to students that the men in Turkey today dress as Europeans and Americans do.

Hodja tales are popular in many Middle Eastern, Eastern European and Asian countries. Hodja is a popular figure in film, theater, cartoons, children's stories, statues, and on radio and television. Hodja means *teacher* or *wise man*. Most of the stories are about everyday village life over 600 years ago, so some of the elements in the tales are from long ago. The stories are usually amusing, sometimes using word play, and often have a moral or something we can learn about life by reading the tale. Hodja's tales make us see the other side of things, and this may be the explanation why he is usually shown riding his donkey backwards.

4. Give students outline maps of Europe and Mediterranean Regions. Guide them to locate and identify many of the countries where they also have Hodja tales using the list on Handout 4. (1. Turkey, 2. Russia, 3. Romania, 4. Georgia, 5. Azerbaijan, 6. Turkmenistan, 7. Iran, 8. Cyprus, 9. Greece, 10. Albania.)

5. Label Turkey and ask students to draw a star or a small Hodja inside the boundaries. Tell students that Turkey claims him as their own, and he is buried in a city in Turkey where they have a Hodja festival every July. What do students suppose happens at a festival to honor a storyteller? (People dress up as Hodja and share Hodja stories and tales; groups present Hodja stories.)

6. Pair students to do a partner read aloud of the four Hodja tales on Handout 2. For support, preview any vocabulary according to the needs of the class.

7. When student partners have completed the readings, call on a few students to retell their favorite

of the Hodja tales. As in many countries' folk tales, there is a moral or life lesson which is being taught. Are there morals in these Hodja tales? Are some of these tales more like jokes? Close Session One with a whole class discussion about the messages of these tales.

SESSION TWO

1. Begin by reviewing the Hodja tales read during Session One by using the following activity: Write food, clothing, housing, sports, customs, and beliefs on the white board. Have the students think or look back at the four tales and come up with details from the readings that would fit under the categories above. Students should then write these categories and details on a sheet of paper.

2. Tell students that in today's session you will be reading aloud one of the best known of the Hodja tales, *The Hungry Coat*. Use the following guiding questions for the read aloud:

Prereading:

1. Now that we have read some Hodja tales, what might you predict this story will be about?
2. What do you think the title means?
3. Remember that the way the illustrator depicts Hodja is how he might have dressed when he lived 600 years ago.

During reading:

1. Hodja helps with the goat in a *caravansary*. Let's figure out this word based on the picture.
2. Why do you think that Nasrettin's friend was wealthy?
3. Why was Nasrettin feeding his coat?
4. Notice the colorful traditional Turkish clothing in the illustrations

Post reading:

1. What does it mean, "a coat does not make a man?"

3. Ask students to partner share an oral retelling of *The Hungry Coat*. Also ask students to share with their partner what the moral to the story is. Then add details from the Hungry Coat story to the categories on the white board.

4. As closure and to measure mastery, give students a blank World map to identify the location of both the United States and Turkey. Share the grading rubric and the writing assignment with the students. Students will then write their retelling of their favorite Hodja tale. They may use their notes for help in recalling the details.

Assessment

Students will write in their own words a retelling of their favorite Hodja tale. Mastery will be a minimum of four out of five on the grading rubric measuring key details in the story.

The note sheets can be graded for completeness. Mastery would be considered 90% or higher.

Students will locate Turkey and the United States on the blank World map with 100% correctness to prove mastery.

Extensions

Ask gifted students to write their own Hodja tale.

Students can perform Readers Theater versions of Hodja's tales found at cmes.arizona.edu/sites/cmes.arizona.edu/files/1.Nasreddin_Hodja_Reader's_Theater_Lesson.pdf

Encourage students to read Hodja tales from the other countries they located on their maps. Have them repeat the white board exercise on categories of culture and see if the details differ from those in Turkey.

Sources

Demi. (2004). *The Hungry Coat*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books. ISBN 978-0-689-84680-9

Halman, Talat. (2000). *The Tales of Nasrettin Hoca*. Istanbul: Silk Road Publications. ISBN 978-975-7499-46-6

Images of Hodja from Guldiz, Mehmet. (1997) *Nasreddin Hodja*. Istanbul: Revas Publishing. ISBN 975-8212-16-8

Jones, Charlotte Foltz. (1999). *Eat your words: a fascinating look at the language of food*. New York: Random House. ISBN 0-385-32578-9
Maps found at <http://alliance.la.asu.edu/maps.htm>

Ozdemir, Nebi. (2011). *The Philosopher's Philosopher Nasreddin Hodja*. Ankara, Turkey: Grafiker Ltd. ISBN 978-975-17-3565-2

