

Program 3-Kids Who Save the Day

This program includes three stories: one traditional Native American tale, and two original pieces; all feature unlikely heroes. As parents and educators, we are often drawn to the motivated, hard working, respectful children in our lives. These tales are not about that kind of child. They are about the kid who gets under your skin: constantly pushing the limits, disobeying the rules, and finding their own way to the finish line. As difficult as this type of child is, both to parent and to educate, we sometimes forget that the very behaviors that we find so trying are the ones that will insure their survival and often their success, in the larger world. I share these tales with you in the hopes that we can recognize all the gifts that a child brings to this life.

The program opens with some original riddles that students from the greater Boston area sent, in response to one of the Curriculum Extension challenges that emerged from the Vietnamese story 'The Fly' in Program 2. If you haven't already, now is the time to have your children or students compare their original riddles to these examples.

Story 1—Gluskabe and the Wind Eagle (Abenaki, Native American)

I first heard this story from teller Joe Bruchac[i], and though most Native American tellers do not want people from outside their culture appropriating their stories, it is often said that even Anglos can understand a trickster tale. For a more in depth discussion about this issue and using indigenous stories to explore their culture of origin go to: http://www.storiesalive.com/Education/Edu_articles.html and read "A Window to the World: Learning About World Cultures Through Their Tales." Children of all ages can identify with Gluskabe. He's curious, he's willful, and he ignores everything his elders try to tell him. This is a brilliant tale for helping children understand the ramifications of their actions, while also exploring the integration between all aspects of nature.

CURRICULUM EXTENSIONS:

Pre Concrete Operational Skill Building:

Have the children listen to the story a second time, this time, with their heads down on their desks and their eyes shut. Invite them to let their imaginations work like a camera, making pictures of each scene and character. Encourage them to use the 5 senses to explore everything that is going on in Gluskabe's world.

Once they have done this, invite them to create a picture about their favorite scene in the story. As a class, arrange these on the board and ask

the children to explain which scene they have captured. Determine if it occurred before or after the scenes that are already displayed. After all the pictures are lined up (teacher should fill in simple stick sketches for any important parts that are missing), have the class retell the story in turn by using the pictures as guideposts.

Encourage the use of original language to bring alive the setting, characters, and drama that they saw in their guided imagery. If a child is reaching for a word to describe a particular image, have them draw that image and ask for input from others until they find just the right word, or ask them to close their eyes again and describe the scene as they are looking at it in their mind's eye. (When visualizing, a different part of the brain goes to work, and the child/teller can discover details they never would have thought of using with their conscious mind.)

Listening Skills:

As the children become more familiar with the tale, have them retell it in smaller and smaller groups, with each individual taking on larger portions of the tale. Eventually, they will be able to retell the story in teams of 2. In this exercise, it is important for each child to listen to their partner in order to pick up where they left off and not violate, but integrate, the details that they have offered. There are a number of exercises that can prepare children to invest themselves in this level of give and take, and I would suggest you explore them with your students before attempting the above. You can find them at:

Curriculum Guides

[Empowering Children To Tell Stories 1 & Empowering Children To Tell Stories 2](#)

Geography & History:

The Abenaki peoples lived in upstate New York and New England, and were once members of the Wabanaki Confederacy. Why don't the Abenaki still have tribal land in this country? Why did so many of these people die when settlers came to their territories? How did the remaining members of the nation survive?

Culture:

How is Gluskabe the same as any kid you know? How is grandmother woodchuck the same as the people who take care of you? How is she different? (These differences can tell you a great deal about this unique culture.) Gluskabe is allowed to make a big mistake. Grandmother woodchuck evidently thinks that he will learn more from making the

mistake than being chided about his desires and stopped.

What is the wisdom of the Aberrance way; Allowing Your Children to make Mistakes and learn from them?

What is the wisdom of stopping your children before they make a mistake?

Environmental Studies:

Gluskabe learns the hard way that the wind is necessary for life on this earth. What other elements are necessary for people, plants, and animals to survive? Recreate this story but in the new version, have Gluskabe ambush and sequester a different force of nature. Possibly it is too hot for him to have a nice nap outside, and he takes away the sun, or it is too rainy for him to go pick berries and so he figures out a way to trick the rain into a cave before blocking the entrance with a large boulder. What happens to Gluskabe when this life-giving force is no longer present?

Note: Between the stories is a collection of delightful hero tales written by Boston area school children, inspired by show #2. Did you have your students create stories or story boards of their own tales? Can you find a slightly larger audience to share them with? Local cable stations are often willing to come and record such a concert. Let your light shine!

Story Two—Zordack, the Hero of Marblehead (original story by J. Black)

This is a true story. Well, true in the sense that I created it for my son's friend Patrick, who endlessly chimed "I don't know what that means" when faced with a question or command. Can you imagine how hard it was to feed this kid when he came over on a play date?

"Patrick, how about some P. B. and J?"

"I don't know what that means."

"Would you eat some chicken soup?"

"I don't know what that means."

"Patrick, stop that. You have to eat something!"

"I don't know what that means."

I think that today Patrick might well be a lawyer, litigating big cases for corporate giants.

CURRICULUM EXTENSIONS:

Geography:

What is a peninsula? Can you look at a map of New England and find Marblehead? Can you find Australia? Can you look at a map of the world and trace the Bunyip's journey?

Environmental Studies:

Look at that map again. You know what the Bunyip ate in each of those places. In modern America our food comes from stores, not from dirt, and it often travels half way around the globe to get here. The Bunyip understood that fresh, nutritious, environmentally viable food is locally produced.

- Take a look at the nations he swam near. What types of food do they eat and why?
- Explore how food production is determined by local geography. Is a place near water or is it land locked? Is there arable land, mountains, or sand? What does food look like in each of these environments? How long is the growing season? What type of plants, animals, and traditions mark these nations, and how do these variables affect their culinary choices?
- If you took the Bunyip's journey, what would you eat?

Language Development/Writing:

If you had to save your town from the Bunyip, how would you do it? You can have children create a brief story board (sequence of sketches representing each scene of their ending) and share their ending orally, or create a written ending that can be read to the class. Have the class vote on which ending would best leave their town safe.

Story 3—Solomon Saves the Day (original story by J. Black)

This brief tale about how my son had to break through my harried, imprinted way of dealing with chaotic mornings is a good model for all children. Adults have one agenda and children have another[i]. In this instance, my son had to maintain a persistent approach to get my attention, or the house might have burned down!

CURRICULUM EXTENSIONS:

Social/Emotional Development:

Ask your students to think about the craziest times they have at home? Have them draw a picture using only shapes and colors and textures to express these times. Solomon was persistent in his attempts to get my attention. Ask your students how they get grown-ups to listen to them in these situations. Their answers can provide a clear window into their worlds.

[i] Joe is a formidable figure in the world of storytelling and literature. He has woven a Seneca rowing song, which I duplicate, into his version of the tale. Visit his web site at: <http://www.josephbruchac.com/>

[ii] If this rings true: “OOPS MA!: *Songs and Stories of Family Life*” by Victor Cockburn is a hilarious set of seven musical stories that reflect the trials and tribulations of a family's daily rituals. From those little footsteps approaching your bed before the sun has risen to the endless debates about how many bedtime books to read, these stories pull their issues from our daily lives, and their resolutions from the best that our imaginations and humor can conjure. Order at: <http://www.storiesalive.com/orderform.html>