

The Duck and the Moon – Critically engaging with a folktale

Context and rationale

This lesson can be taught in a beginner, intermediate, and/or multi-level ESL class. Developed around an oral folktale, this lesson is particularly appropriate for students who have little experience and/or success with formal education and reading texts. Additionally, because it addresses fears and issues about speaking up in the ESL class, it is also well-suited as a community-building and/or introductory lesson.

Lesson Overview

The heart of this lesson is an oral folktale with a moral about the positive and negative consequences of risk-taking. Both during and after the out loud reading of the folktale, the teacher supports the students in constructing the story, interpreting its message and then applying its moral to their own classroom and their learning of English. The first 4 activities are designed as pre-reading activities to support the students in understanding the story. Activity 6 involves the students in reflecting on the moral of the story and creating a code of conduct for the class where students can feel supported for speaking up in class. Additional optional activities are then listed that support students in further engaging with the text and its ideas.

The Text

The Duck and the Moon

A duck was swimming in the river looking for fish. The whole day passed, but she didn't find any fish. When night came she saw the moon reflected on the water. She thought it was a fish and she dove down to catch it. The other ducks saw her, and they all made fun of her. The duck felt ashamed and timid. Later even when she saw a fish under water she did not try to catch it. After many weeks, she died of hunger.

The text is adapted from Tolstoy's fable *The Duck and the Moon*. The text and the kernel of this lesson come from www.danspalding.com.

Lesson objectives

- The students will engage with a folktale and use it as a launching pad to explore and share their own feelings about learning ESL in their classroom.
- Students will interpret and reflect on the moral of the story and apply it to their learning of English.
- The students will agree on a code of conduct for the classroom so that students don't feel ashamed about speaking English.
- After listening to the folktale, the students will be able to sequence the events of the story in the correct order.

Grammar, structures and competencies that support lesson objectives

- Vocabulary for feelings
- Irregular past tense forms
- Expressing feelings
- Imperatives in both affirmative and negative forms (for creating code of conduct)

Activity 1 – Defining the characteristics of a folktale

1. Elicit from the students the characteristics of a folktale, or traditional story.
Possible characteristics include: moral, characters are animals, imaginative story, grandparents were story tellers, stories are for children.
2. Write their characteristics on the board and add any important ones that have been missed.

Objective: Students will generate ideas about what a folktale is.

Activity 2 – Introducing the vocabulary

ashamed, find, moon, catch, river, dive/dove, duck, fish, reflect, made fun, die of hunger

1. Students are paired or grouped and assigned 2-3 vocabulary words. They then report back to the class with a definition and example sentence for each vocabulary word.
2. Students can make vocabulary cards to learn the vocabulary.

Objective: Students will understand key vocabulary from the story beforehand.

Activity 3 - Picture dictation

1. On a blank piece of paper students draw a horizontal line across the lower third of the page to represent the water line.
2. The teacher then reads out the following sentences containing target vocabulary that also describe the scene of the folktale.
 - There is a duck swimming on the river
 - There is a moon in the sky
 - The moonlight is reflecting on the water
 - There are fish on the bottom of the river
 - There is another duck diving in the river
 - It is catching a fish in its mouth
3. The students will draw an image on their paper that corresponds with the sentence.



Objective: Students will have a concrete image of the setting of the story.

Activity 4 - Making a prediction about the story

Elicit their predictions about the story.

- *Who are the characters in the story?*
- *Where does the take place?*
- *What will happen in the story?*

Objective: Students will begin constructing possible elements of the story before they listen to it.

Activity 5 - Listening to the folktale

1. The teacher reads the story once all the way through.
2. Then the teacher does a 2nd reading interspersed with the following questions designed to support the students in constructing the meaning of the text rather than merely retrieving information.

The Duck and The Moon

A duck was swimming
in the river looking for fish.
The whole day passed,
but she didn't find any fish.

Teacher question: *Why was the duck looking for fish?*

When night came
she saw the moon reflected on the water.
She thought it was a fish and
she dove down to catch it.

Teacher questions: *What happened at night?*
 Why did she dive for the reflection of the moon?

The other ducks saw her,
and they all made fun of her.
The duck felt ashamed and timid.
Later even when she saw a fish under water
she did not try to catch it.
After many weeks, she died of hunger.

Teacher questions: *Why did the other ducks make fun of her?*
 Why did the duck die of hunger?

Activity 6 - Discussion, interpretation and appropriation of the story

1. In groups students answer these questions. Answers are discussed as a whole class.
 - *What can the duck do?*
 - *What is the moral of this story?*
 - *Do you sometimes feel like the duck? When?*
 - *What can we do in the classroom so nobody feels like the duck?*
2. The teacher writes student ideas on the board and together the class decides on a code of conduct for the class

Additional optional activities (Activities with asterisks can be assigned as homework.)

Optional activity – Word Find* (See materials)

Optional activity - Story cut up (See materials)

Optional activity - Cloze dictation of the story (See materials)

Students can be asked to identify verbs in the past tense

Optional activity – Story cloze* (See materials)

Optional activity– Expressing feelings

1. Present/Elicit vocabulary by showing feeling images (see materials)
2. Present structures for expressing feelings
I/She feel(s) _____
3. Students cut out images of feelings, label them on reverse side, and test each other
4. Students do *Feeling images handout** (See materials)
5. Students do a line-up, each one with an image, and tell each student how that student feels
You feel _____
6. Review present/past forms for questions and answers of *feel*
7. Students do Feelings interview on English (See materials)

Optional activity for beginners – Expressing feelings

Present students with *BE* conjugations

1. Students review images of 4 feelings (happy, sad, angry, nervous)
2. Students pass the images around and describe how the person is feelings
3. Students do line up with images
4. Students do *Find someone* activity (See materials)