



Cajun Folklore Secondary



Historic Homes • Gardens • Artifacts • Costumed Crafts People
Boat Tours • Gift Shop • Restaurant



Standards

Standards as developed by the Louisiana Department of Education. Available online at <http://www.vermilionville.org/vermilionville/educate/lesson-plans>.

Grade 7

Social Studies

Historical Thinking Skills

- **GLE #45:** Explain the point of view of key historical figures and groups in U.S. history (H-1A-M2)
- **GLE #50:** Conduct historical research using a variety of resources, and evaluate those resources for reliability and bias, to answer historical questions related to U.S. history (H-1A-M6)

Grade 8

Social Studies

Places and Regions

- **GLE #5:** Describe and analyze the distinguishing physical and/or human characteristics of Louisiana regions (G-1B-M1)

Historical Thinking Skills

- **GLE #64:** Compare and contrast events and ideas from Louisiana's past and present, explaining political, social, or economic contexts (H-1A-M2)
- **GLE #70:** Conduct historical research using a variety of resources, and evaluate those resources, to answer historical questions related to Louisiana history (H-1A-M6)

Objectives

1. Students will describe the meaning of folklore, and identify multiple Louisiana folklore stories.
2. Students will analyze Louisiana folklore stories.
3. Students will prepare a song, commercial, play, art display, or design an advertisement describing their folklore story.

Pre-Visit Activity

Teachers. We have made two introduction documents available to you on our website – a word document as well as a PowerPoint with pictures depicting the cultures that we represent. Please take some time to review these two documents with your class prior to your visit here. You can access them [here](#), by clicking on

- Introduction to Vermilionville and
- Vermilionville PowerPoint

Before presenting the lesson, students will need to be introduced to folklore. A short discussion on folklore should take place before the lesson is presented.



Popular among many of the state's cultural groups are folktales – traditional fictional narratives which are intended for entertainment but frequently illustrate some truism or moral. Louisiana's folktales include many of the tale types found universally, but with notable cultural modifications. The folktales of French Louisiana are similar to tales found in parts of Canada, Missouri, and the Antilles, and reflect a close relationship to the narrative lore of France. The folktales of the pine hills of North Louisiana – populated primarily by English-speaking people – are more illustrative of Anglo narrative lore.

Louisiana's narrative maze becomes even more intricate when the state's smaller enclaves are considered. In the parish of St. Bernard, folktales of Spanish origin are told by Isleños, whose ancestors emigrated from the Canary Islands. In Natchitoches Parish, oral traditions of the Spanish Lake community are Hispanic and Native American in origin. The communities of Kolin and Libuse in Rapides Parish maintain a Czechoslovakian oral tradition.

Folktales are an integral part of Louisiana's heritage. They reflect a fascinating array of cultures which have modified each other, yet they retain a flavor of the individual teller's background. For instance, the main characters of animal tales usually conform to stock types. These types are often ancient in origin and may be either tamed or wild animals that speak, think, and act like ordinary people. The cunning wolf or rabbit, and the stupid wolf, alligator or bear, are common examples.

Anchor Lesson

While touring Vermilionville, ask students if they have ever heard of any folktales? Do they know who the boogeyman is? Also, ask our artisans if they know of any folktales and ask them to share with the students.

Post-Visit Activity

Materials needed: poster board, drawing and coloring accessories (for poster advertisement)

Have students break into four groups. Each group will get an assigned spooky Louisiana folklore story (see four attached stories). The students are to read each story carefully then perform the story in front of the class by creating a poster advertisement, performing a skit, singing a song, writing a poem, or acting out a commercial to tell the story. After this activity is completed, students will work in groups again to complete a jigsaw activity to reflect on their folklore story.

Evaluation

Teacher will assess students on their performance and their presentation to the class.



Loup-garou



The legends of the rougarou, or loup-garou, have been passed down from generation to generation as long as Louisiana has been inhabited by modern man. The rougarou is closely related to the European version of the werewolf, but has a few very distinct differences from the werewolf seen in movies and on television.

Here in Louisiana, we have our own werewolf like creature who stalks the swamps. The rougarou is a beast who people have described as having the head of a wolf and the body of a man. The legend says that when a person comes into contact with a loup-garou and sheds the blood of the beast, the loup-garou will then change to its human form and reveal its secret. The victim then becomes a loup-garou for 101 days. If the victim speaks of the encounter to anyone, it becomes a loup-garou. But if he remains quiet about it, he returns to its human form and continue on with its life. In the legends, the loup-garou is said to be someone the victim knows, such as a jealous former friend.

To protect against the Cajun rougarou, lay 13 small objects such as pennies, beans, or broom straws by your doors. The rougarou is not too bright. He cannot count higher than 12. When he comes to the 13th object, he will get confused and will start counting again. The poor thing will be there counting all night until dawn when he must flee the sun.

French Catholics have often used the tale as a caution to young ones who want to break Lent, as it is said that anyone who breaks lent for seven years will be turned into a rougarou.



The legend was often used to scare children when misbehaving. What makes them different from the common werewolf is that they don't change with the cycles of the moon and have complete charge over their actions.



The Grunch



The Grunch is a New Orleans based urban legend closely related to the chupacabra. Back when New Orleans was first developing the Eastern suburbs, there existed an old road barely known of by most residents of the area. This road was long and narrow and led off into the deep thicket of woods surrounding the area, eventually coming to a dead end.

According to legend, there was a strange group of humans living in these woods that were a strange mix of albinos and dwarfs, forced to live away from society, during a time when people who were thought of as different were considered creations of the devil. Because of humanity's cruel nature, these people became a sort of side show for teenagers and immature adults.

The locals claim that their seclusion to the woods had caused the people to interbreed and combine their abnormalities to eventually become almost inhuman in appearance. At this point in time, the end of that long road, then labeled "Grunch" road, was considered nothing but a freak show and occasionally a make out spot for desperate teens who may not have believed the legend, that is until people started to disappear.

The most common description of the New Orleans Grunch or el Chupacabra is a goat-like being, appearing to have leathery or scaly black-gray skin and sharp spines, long horns, or quills running down its back. This creature stands approximately 3 to 4 feet high. They are also said to seem more intelligent and have human like skills, able to open doors, use tools similar to how a monkey or primate would.



Le Feu Follet



The feu follet is a ghostly light or flame that appears in the swamps. If you try to follow it, the light will retreat, leading you deeper into the swamps until you are hopelessly lost. Some say the feu follet is a bad angel, and other say it's the wandering soul of an unbaptized child, or a baby who died while still nursing. Some old Acadian stories say the feu follet likes to return to the nursery. If a baby wakes up with unusually rosy cheeks, that means the feu follet has visited in the night, stealing some of the baby's breath. To ward off the feu follet, mustard seeds can be scattered on the floor. The spirit will try to count them, lose track, and stay distracted all night.

In African American folklore, it is believed that on a dark night, it leads its victim, who is obliged to follow, either in the river, where he is drowned, or in bushes of thorns, which tear him to pieces.

There are those who say the feu follet is associated with buried treasure. Tales of buried pirate treasure are prevalent in the South, especially in Louisiana. As tradition states, before a pirate such as William Kidd or Jean Lafitte would bury their treasure, they would kill a member of their own crew to throw into the hole along with the chest. Doing so would bind the slain man's spirit to the treasure, restlessly guarding the hoard until the crack of doomsday. This spirit would then take on the form of a ball of light, known as the feu follet.

One such story involves two men working on the railroad along Lake Pontchartrain. One night, a soft blue light moving through the trees awakened them. Having already heard the legend from the local people, the men grabbed their shovels and ran after the spirit, their minds on the fabled treasure. The light finally stopped, sinking into the ground. The two men dug furiously, and after a few minutes, they struck something hard. Using their hands, they brushed away the dirt to reveal the top of a large wooden chest. At this point, one of the men got greedy, and struck his companion over the head.





As the assailant began to pull up on the chest in an attempt to get it out of the hole, the ground around his feet began to sink. As the other man started to awaken, he saw his friend's last moments, screaming in terror as both he and the treasure sunk into the ground. Frightened that he might share his friend's fate, he ran back to the camp, where he crawled back into his tent and waited for the morning. He returned when the sun had risen, but the only thing that he found from the previous night's encounter was his and his friend's shovels. As he left the swamp, he could hear the sound of laughter in the wind, mocking him.



The Honey Island Swamp Monster



The Honey Island Swamp is a tract of bottomland lying between the East Pearl and West Pearl Rivers in south-east Louisiana. A legend tells of a train wreck in the area in the early 20th century. A traveling circus was on the train, and from it a group of chimpanzees escaped and interbred with the local alligator population.

The first heavily publicized sighting of what would become known as the Honey Island Swamp monster took place in 1963, when a retired air traffic controller named Harlan Ford claimed to have spotted the creature while fishing the black waters of the Pearl River. Ford and a friend named Bill Mills later brought a casting back of a very unusual footprint. The footprint was very large and featured three webbed and clawed toes.

According to legend, a terrifying monster lurks deep in the untamed wilds of Louisiana's Honey Island Swamp, less than an hour from New Orleans. Standing over 7 feet tall and weighing between 400 and 500 pounds, the Honey Island Swamp monster – also known as the Louisiana Wookiee – is said to be covered in a thick coat of matted gray or brown hair. Its yellow eyes are seemingly reptilian, and the smell it emits has been called the stench of death. This primitive creature has long been blamed for the deaths of livestock and the mysterious disappearances of children in adjacent areas.





Jigsaw Group Discussion Worksheet

Story Title: -----

Main Character

What does the main character look like? What special abilities does the main character have?

Setting

Where and when does the story take place? How is the setting important to the story?

Support Characters

What other characters appear in the story? How does the main character relate to them?

Main Plot Points

What are two or three important events in the story? What is the main lesson or main idea of the story?



Problem and Solution

What problems does the main character face? How are those problems resolved?



