

Centennial: Have I Got A Story For You - Folklore of Utah

Summary

by Mari Domanski. The tales, legends, and traditions we pass to one another are also sources of history.

Materials

Samples of various folklore from the state, the nation, and the world Seek out local folklore, including perhaps, Utah tales like 'The Ghost of the Great Salt Lake', 'The Legend of Timpanogos', stories of Bryce Canyon, etc.

Ghost of the Great Salt Lake - video from Salt Lake District Media Center

Wonders of Utah - video from Salt Lake District Media Center Mercur: The Town That Would Not

Die - video from Salt Lake District Media Center

Lore of Our Land by Lisa Yount; J. Weston Walch, Publisher Utah's Heritage by S. George Ellsworth

Background for Teachers

Ghost stories, tall tales, and the like can provide an ideal focus for knowing who we are by knowing who we were. Folklore can provide multiple paths of study including ethnic contributions, cultural differences and similarities, neighborhoods, choices made by groups, belief systems, relationship of people to the land, etc. Since the creation of folklore is an active, on-going process, students can flex their thinking and creativity muscles while contributing to the future literary history of Utah.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will identify the clues that folklore provides about Utah's past. Students will create a piece of folklore for a place or event in or near the community.

Instructional Procedures

See preface material for the Utah Centennial Lesson Plans book.

Begin each class with a riddle, a recipe, a legend, a folk song or the like. Ask students what these have in common.

Identify the history that class openers and folk stories can provide.

Share the folklore of Utah collected by the teacher. This can also be successfully begun with a storyteller invited to your class. Historical organizations may be able to help you locate a local storytelling treasure. Discuss how folklore increases your understanding of Utah. How do these same stories create wonder or questions?

Research your community for curiosities that need explaining: a building that seems out of place, an environmental unexplainable, unmatched fence sections or sidewalk sections, a unique house in a neighborhood, etc. and share these with the class.

Visit, photograph, or sketch these places for class display and inspiration.

Extensions

Select one of the curiosities from the class display and create a collection of folklore to help better connect the item to the local community.

Interview an older resident to hear the stories and language of other time periods in Utah history. With permission, use the information as the basis for a tall tale, legend, etc.

Encourage students to discover ways that folklore changes over time. Challenge them to modify their created collection of folklore to reflect new changes.

Invite older members of the community to a 'Utah Through Time' social. Have the students solicit and record the stories, tales, traditions of the past in their own community. At the conclusion of the 'Utah Through Time' social, students will present their collections of folklore. These can be presented orally or printed in a booklet.

Authors

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