

Talk Story

Overview:

During this activity students play the “telephone” game to help them understand how stories can change in retelling if they are not carefully preserved. Oral tradition relies upon carefully preserving stories and histories by verbally passing them down unchanged from generation to generation.



Objectives:

The student will:

- understand that an oral tradition is a tradition in which histories and cultural stories are passed down verbally rather than written;
- understand that Hawai‘i has an oral tradition of which mo‘olelo are a part;
- recognize the importance, within oral tradition, of passing down stories unchanged from one generation to the next; and
- identify ways young people can help observe oral tradition.

Materials:

- Teacher Information Sheet: “Stingy Kamaka”
- Student Worksheet: “Talk Story”

Answers to Student Worksheet:

1. b) A tradition in which histories and cultural stories are passed down verbally rather than written.
2. True
3. Answers will vary but might include: listen to Kūpuna, learn how to tell mo‘olelo and types of cultural stories, share mo‘olelo with others, etc.

Talk Story

Activity Procedure:

1. Explain that in ancient times, Hawaiians passed down historical and cultural stories verbally rather than through writing. This oral tradition is carried on by Kūpuna today.
2. Divide your class into groups of 5-10 students. Select one student from each group and take them into the hallway. Ask students to listen carefully as you read them a mo‘olelo, because they will need to retell the mo‘olelo to someone in their group. Read them “Stingy Kamaka,” from the Teacher Information Sheet.
3. Return to the classroom and ask students to rejoin their groups. Explain that you have told a mo‘olelo to one student from each group. These students are going to begin a game of “telephone” within their groups. This game requires that the first student whisper the mo‘olelo (from memory) to a second student, who in turn whispers it to a third, until the mo‘olelo reaches the last student.
4. After all groups have had an opportunity to finish the game, the last student from each group should share the mo‘olelo with the class.
5. Discuss the similarities and differences between the final stories of each group. Read the original mo‘olelo to the entire class.
6. Discuss the similarities and differences between the final stories and the original mo‘olelo. Explain that oral tradition relies upon carefully preserving stories and histories by passing them down, unchanged, from generation to generation. It is essential that when students are sharing a mo‘olelo, they retell it exactly as the Kūpuna told it. Ask students what might happen if every Kūpuna throughout history told the mo‘olelo differently.

Stingy Kamaka

There is a place in the mountains at Kōke‘e that once had a wonderful garden full of taro, sweet potatoes, bananas, and sugar cane; everything grew in abundance. Today, plants will not grow there. Why? The garden used to belong to selfish Kamaka. Kamaka made sure his family had enough to eat, but he would not share his food with others so the rest of the plants rotted where they grew.

Hungry, tired travelers often saw the garden and asked Kamaka for food, but with a mean look, he would say, “Go away, there is not enough food, only enough for ourselves.” Most Hawaiians give thanks and share when they have extra food, for they believe food is a gift of the land. Kamaka was different and became well known for his stinginess. Soon he was called, “Stingy Kamaka.”

One afternoon a tall traveler came upon the garden of Kamaka. He was a giant from another mountain who had gotten lost in the morning mist. He had wandered in the forest for many hours and when he saw the garden full of food he rejoiced and called to the owner of the garden. “E nei (hello), is anyone there?” Kamaka came out of his house and said, “go away we have nothing for beggars,” then went back into his house and shut the door. The giant could not believe his ears. He tried to sleep near the edge of the forest that night, but it was a cold and damp. The next clear and sunny day the giant found his way home, but he was angry when he thought of what Kamaka had done. That night he went back to the garden of Kamaka and uprooted all of the best plants. Every night the giant went back to make sure no plants would grow in the garden again. Even today this piece of land remains barren.

<h2>Talk Story</h2>

1. What is an oral tradition?
 - a) A tradition that involves maintaining good dental hygiene.
 - b) A tradition in which histories and cultural stories are passed down verbally rather than written.
 - c) A tradition in which histories and cultural stories are preserved in writing.
 - d) A tradition which requires all students to pass a verbal exam every year.

2. Oral tradition requires that histories and cultural stories are passed down unchanged, from one generation to the next. (Circle the correct answer.) *True or False*

3. What can young people do to preserve Hawai'i's oral tradition?
