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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2006 Volume III: Children's Literature, Infancy to Early Adolescence

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## **Using African and African-American Folktales in a Genre Study**

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by Rita Sorrentino

The curriculum unit "Using African and African-American Folktales in a Genre Study" is planned for an elementary multi-age classroom to coincide with the celebration of Black History Month. The unit will be a partnership of language arts and technology. This four-week curriculum is designed for primary students in grades 1-3 but can certainly be fleshed out for upper elementary students in fourth and fifth grades. The reading and study of African and African-American folktales will help students make connections to their cultural heritage as they engage a variety of texts. Students can experience the African values of vitality and inventiveness as they interact with small and clever tricksters and characters with Olympian strength and iron will.

Each week part of the lesson will be conducted in the classroom with follow-up lessons and activities in the computer lab. Participation in this unit will help students acquire a schema for the folktale genre. In keeping with the oral tradition of storytelling, they will work toward a final project of designing and publishing a podcast. Education and entertainment become partners in learning as students appreciate how these African and African-American folktales are "equipment for living" (Kenneth Burke) since they are part of our present life, connecting us to the past and guiding us to the future.

(Developed for Language Arts, Computer Science, Social Studies, and Black History Month, grades 1-3; recommended for Language Arts, Integrating Technology in Multi-Age Class, Social Studies, and Black History Month, grades 1-5)

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