

WE TELL STORIES

Earth Tales

Art Form: Theatre
Style: Contemporary
Culture: Multicultural

MEET THE ARTIST:

We Tell Stories is a multi-ethnic storytelling troupe with a threefold purpose: to entertain and educate audiences through the literature and folklore of all times and cultures; to expose them to the process of acting as an art form; and to stimulate a multicultural awareness of the humanity that unites us and the beauties that distinguish us. The company constantly seeks fresh material and performs it with an extemporaneous flavor, encouraging people to participate from their seats and on the stage. Each story is brought to life through the use of fanciful props and costume pieces pulled from a large trunk in the center of the stage. We Tell Stories has performed in museums, parks, libraries, schools and on television. The first rule of education is, "Get their attention." We Tell Stories does that and more.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

The places we live (our homes, streets, neighborhoods, cities and countries) all inhabit the same planet: the Earth.

Earth Tales tells about cultures who shared this planet long before our time, people who lived closely with Mother Earth. They listened to her voice, shared her rhythms and sang her songs. The stories which comprise this program are:

"Who Owns the Land," which presents a myth from Norway about the Norse Goddess Freya, and how she settles an argument between two farmers who both claim to "own" the land.

"The Invisible Hunters," a tale from the Miskito people of Nicaragua which tells of a group of hunters who are given the gift of invisibility as long as they keep a very special promise.

"The Rainbow Bridge," a Chumash creation myth which tells of the arrival of man in the land we now call California.

All of these stories will help students think deeply about the wonder of our beautiful planet.

PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

Every day, someone, somewhere tells someone else a story. It might be true. It might be fictional. It might be a story from long ago, or from today, or even about tomorrow.

Telling stories is the way people recall important events, imagine the future, or share thoughts, beliefs and values. Telling a tale helps us learn in an enjoyable way; the lessons we hear delight us, excite us, and stay with us for a lifetime. The tales of ancient cultures help children imagine what life was like in different times. In *Earth Tales*, students will see and hear how important it is to cherish and care for this planet we all share.

A dominant theme in the performance is ecology. Ecology is the study of the relationship of plants and animals (including man) to their physical and biological environment. The word is drawn from the Greek term *oikos*, which means "household." Our household, the Earth, is made possible through an intricate system of relationships between the essential elements of our atmosphere: light, heat (solar radiation), moisture, wind, oxygen, carbon dioxide, and nutrients in the soil, water and atmosphere. We are a part of this system, in that our actions can have a direct effect on our

environment and on the others around us.

Practicing respect for our physical surroundings helps us learn to respect ourselves and others.

No matter where we come from, we still all live on the same Earth, and need the same things to survive.

Outside our homes is our second home, where we walk, play, work and live. This "home" is shared with

many others. It is hoped that through these

stories, students will learn a little bit more about "our" household.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Which of the stories did you like best? Why?
- In "Who Owns the Land," what lesson did the two farmers learn? Who does "own" the land?
- In "The Invisible Hunters," what happened when the hunters broke their promise?
- Why did the people in "The Rainbow Bridge" have to leave their land and cross the sea? The story tells why the Chumash people feel closely related to dolphins. Have you ever felt close to an animal? Why?
- Which characters in the stories did you like the best? Which ones would you most want to be like? Which ones didn't you like? Why?

FRAMEWORK FOCUS - LANGUAGE ARTS:

Everyone has a story to tell; everyone's life is interesting, special and worth hearing about. Ask your students to imagine that they are a character in a story. Help them make a list of "titles" for personal life stories, such as "My Horrible Shopping Trip," or "The Wonderful Birthday," "The Day I Went to School" or "My Hamster and Me." The titles should reflect actual events. (This activity may be adjusted for grade level; younger students can create a single class story about an event that they have shared or all experienced, such as going to the market, playing outside, taking a walk, or a class fire drill or field trip.) After students have selected titles, help them answer the following questions:

- What is your story about?
- Where does it take place?
- What is the most important event that happens?
- Who are the other important people in the story?
- What lessons do your characters learn?

Place children in pairs or groups, or keep them together as a class, and ask them to begin "writing" their stories. A simple way to begin is "Once upon a time, there was a...." Students may create their stories verbally, or may use this as a writing assignment.

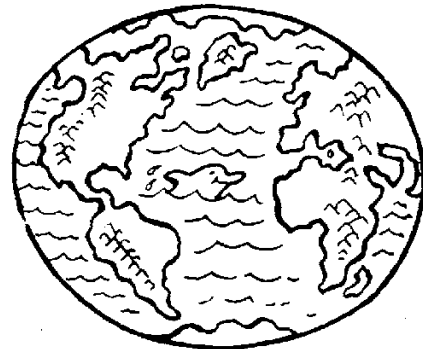
Legend:

- ⊙ Artistic perception
- ❖ Creative expression
- ▶ Historical & cultural context
- ⇒ Aesthetic valuing
- * Connections, Relations, Applications

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- ▶ Use a globe to identify the countries or areas of origin for the various *Earth Tales*. Ask students to find southern California. How far away is it from the other locations?
- ▶ Using the globe or a world map, identify locations for the settings in some of your core literature. Look at the topography of the areas. Are there lakes or rivers? Are there mountains? Are there oceans or deserts?
- ❖ Ask students to select a story from the performance or a core literature story and have them read about and research the location of the story. Then ask them to draw a picture from the story, making sure they include parts of the natural environment such as trees, plants and animals, or appropriate weather events, such as rain, snow or sunshine.
- ⇒ Ask students to look around their own home and ask themselves if they are helping to protect their personal part of the Earth. Do they recycle? Do they take care of their parks and playgrounds?
- ⊙ Review the following vocabulary with students. How do these terms relate to the performance? What do these words mean? Why are they important to your students and to future generations?

atmosphere	globe
biosphere	household
earth	ozone
ecology	pollution
ecosystem	world



BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Farndon, John. *How the Earth Works*. Readers Digest Books, New York, NY; 1994.
- Tarback, Edward J. *Earth Science*. Prentice Hall, New York, NY: 1996.