

World Cultures and the Moon

Overview:

In this 35-minute survey of four early world cultures, students will identify visual representations of Moon myths from China, India, the Aztecs and the Native American Oto tribe. The class will analyze the similarities and differences between the myths and representational styles of the cultures. The teacher will ask students to identify correlations between their own culture. The teacher will read the three myths and present small posters of the myths' visual representations. The students will work in pairs to match each myth's character with the representation and present their answers and observations to the class.

Key Concepts:

- Students will be able to compare/contrast myths from world cultures and popular culture theories.
- Students will be able to comprehend works of fiction that have been read aloud and cite specific events for future reference.
- Students are able to internalize and summarize folk tales from ancient world cultures.
- Students are able to recognize literary clues that relate to a visual representation.

Standards Addressed:

- English Language Arts: 2-1, 3-1, 4-1, 5-1,6-1, 7-1, E1-1, E2-1, E3-1, E4-1
- ESOL: L1, L2, L3
- Modern & Classical Languages: 2.1
- Social Studies: GS – 2.4
- Science: 1-3
- Visual Arts: 3.1 all levels, 4.1 all levels, H1-4.2, H2-4.2, H3-4.2, H4-4.2, K-5.2, 1-5.2, 2-5.2, 3-5.2, 4-5.2, 5-5.2, K-6.2, 5-6.2

Materials:

For teacher

- Small poster of the Moon
- 5 sets of small posters of cultural representations
- Copies of the 4 myths
- Blackboard/ Dry erase board/ SMART board

For student pairs

- 2 sheets of lineless paper
- Pencil

Preparation:

Draw two blank charts on the board consisting of five columns each. Above one, write VISUALS and above the other, write STORIES. These should be large enough to accommodate multiple students' input at the end of the activity. The columns headers should be INDIA, CHINA, AZTEC, OTO and US for both charts.

The Activity:

1. Begin by asking the students to look at the small poster of the Moon as you hold it up. Ask them to think about and write down any beliefs they may have about the way the Moon was created, what it is made of, etc. They may either write these down or say them aloud.
2. Ask the students to listen carefully as you read the myths from four different ancient cultures. Tell them they are allowed to take notes as the activity relies on their understanding of the stories, but they will not have copies of them. Read the myths without identifying which culture they are from. Be sure to note when one ends and you are about to read another by announcing the title.
3. Show the visual representations by holding them in the air and passing the other 4 sets of images around the room. Do not show the images in the same order that their stories were read. Hold the images up and ask the students to think about how it is organized visually, what might be some visual indicators or clues to the culture. Pass the fifth set of images out into the class so that all 5 sets are being circulated for closer inspection while the students are talking in their pairs.
4. The students will need to break up into pairs and each pair needs to copy the two blank charts you have drawn on the board.
5. Ask students to match each story with its visual representation. This will rely on their own and their partner's listening comprehension skills. The students will be able to look more closely at the representations when they are passed around.
6. When the students feel they have matched each image to its story, they will then fill in the blank charts on their sheets of lineless paper with lists of comparisons between the images, the stories and their own beliefs they wrote down or said aloud in the beginning of the activity. This will require the students to share their beliefs with their partner. They may find that the partner shares beliefs or has some the other student has never heard. The pairs will also need to cooperate and agree upon which image matches which myth.
7. Choose one student to stand where they are visible by the whole class and hold up the image they feel matches each story as you say the titles. The class should be asked for input as to whether they feel the student is correct. This will require the student to point to particular motifs and symbols within the images that serve as visual clues or indicators and correlate to aspects of the stories.
8. Choose one pair of students to come to the board and fill in the charts. One chart will outline their group's comparisons of the stories to one another and the other chart will outline their group's comparisons of the visual representations to one another. Invite the rest of the class to comment. This will serve as a good point to focus the class discussion on global cultures, technological advancements or visual art.

Extensions:

- Students may create their own myths and draw the main character.
- Students may pick one of the phenomena explained by the myths and find out the scientific explanation.
- Students may find other myths that relate to the Moon and share them with the class the next day.

STORIES:

Chandra Moon

In the dawn of the creation, when Brahma, the Hindu god of creation, wanted multiply population, he created sage Atri from his heart. With the creator's consent, sage Atri went to the woods for performing a rigorous penance for 3,000 divine years. Owing to the power he developed through this penance his tears became beacons to radiate all the directions. This radiance again coalesced to create the Chandra or Moon. For the benefit of the world, Chandra's mentor, Brahmaji, gave him a chariot. When the gods saw Chandra's brilliance they began to sing to him, which made him all the more radiant. The Moon used his chariot for circumambulating the earth 21 times. During this journey wherever his grace touched the earth, there grew up variety of herbs and grains.

Then Chandra performed a penance lasting for 10,000 years to please Brahma. He wanted the creator god to appoint him the lord of all seeds, herbs, water and Brahmins. Brahma was pleased, so Chandra became the presiding deity of Brahmins and all the edible natural products of the earth.

It was on the advice of Brahma that Chandra organized a Rajasooya Yagya to which all the gods, sages and seers were invited. When the ceremony concluded, Chandra honored each invitee with gifts. In return, all the gods, sages and seers also gave gifts to Chandra. Daksha Prajapati was so happy, he gave all of his 27 daughters to Chandra to marry. Getting so much honor and rewards Chandra developed some arrogance. This made him consider himself the super deity and neglect all other deities.

One day Chandra kidnapped Tara, the wife of a divine Guru and his mentor, Brihaspati. Seeing Chandra acting so immorally, all started to condemn him. Although the gods begged Chandra to return Tara to Brihaspati, he didn't want to. This caused the gods to attack Chandra, but he had become so strong that all were defeated.

The defeated gods asked for advice from Shivji, the god of destruction. Shivji decided to teach Chandra a lesson, so they met on a battlefield. Then Brahma called to Chandra, "Son! Don't be so hard headed. Don't you know Lord Shiv is the primal man? He is the most powerful and can never be defeated. Your arrogance may cause your doom. So

you must peacefully return Tara to Brihaspati with due apologies. Lord Shiv is very kind-hearted. He will surely forgive your offense”.

Chandra realized his folly, begged forgiveness from Lord Shiv and returned Tara to Brihaspati. But he had committed a great sin eloping with wife of his mentor and he was afflicted with a disease and became lusterless. But the Moon's losing his radiance created a furor on the earth, causing a disturbance in the natural order. All the sages, seers, gods, men and demons began to cry in distress.

Chandra was also advised to seek shelter of his mentor Brahmaji and asked him to reveal as to how he could be cured. Brahmaji said that he had to bear consequences of his misdeed. However, only Lord Shiv could redeem him: “You should go to the Eternal Temple and chant *Mahamritunjaya Mantra*. Only his blessings can cure you.” Chandra reached the Temple and chanted the Mantra 10 times. Suddenly, Lord Shiv appeared before him: “I am pleased with you. What is your wish? I shall grant it to you”. Chandra was delighted to have Lord Shiv before him and said, “Lord, owing to my eloping with the Guru's wife I have been afflicted with deadly consumptive disease. Please redeem me from this affliction”.

Lord Shiv replied: “Chandra! Everyone has to bear the consequences of their misdeeds. But since you have done a strict penance to please me, I grant you this blessing that you shall alternatively wax and wane for two weeks, you will continually lose your radiance for 15 days and gain it in the next 15 days.”

Running Antelope

There once was a circular village in the mountains where a boy named 'Running Antelope' lived with his grandmother. He was with a group of people who went to visit a prairie village ruled over by a cruel chief. The chief was fond of a very beautiful maiden named 'Little Hill', but could not succeed in winning her over.

When Running Antelope saw Little Hill he too was smitten by her beauty, and spent most of his time with her. Finally they were married, and the couple lived in her village under the cruel chief. However, the chief was very unhappy with this turn of events, and threatened that some day he would take Little Hill away from Running Antelope. Almost every night when people gathered in the center of the village for games and entertainment, the chief would try to win their affection by casting beautiful and valuable pieces of corral, turquoise, and beads onto the ground for people to pick up.

Running Antelope collected many beads and went home to present them to his new wife, but when he got to his lodge, Little Hill could not be found anywhere. So Running Antelope snuck up to the chief's lodge and, as he expected, he heard the voice of Little Hill singing. He burst into the lodge, and demanded the return of his wife, but the chief pulled out a knife and Running Antelope had to flee. The chief grabbed his quiver of

poisoned arrows and chased after him, shooting at the young man as they ran. Running Antelope was on the verge of being overtaken by his pursuer when he came to the sandy bank of a lake. There he prayed to the Waterspirits of the lake to save him, and without further hesitation he jumped into the waters. The Waterspirits shot a great swirling geyser of water into the sky that hurled Running Antelope all the way to the Moon and to safety. When the chief came upon this scene, he shut his eyes tightly for fear that seeing the spirits would kill him because he knew he was a cruel chief. So Running Antelope was saved from the chief, but forever separated from his beloved wife. He is the man that we see in the moon.

One day the chief was out near a lake when his eyes fell upon the reflected image of the Moon. To him, the image of Running Antelope was so vivid that he thought his enemy was right there in the waters, so he rushed in after him. That was his undoing, for the Waterspirits overwhelmed him with wave upon wave of water until he drowned.

Chang'e

Chang'e was a beautiful young girl working in the Jade Emperor's palace in heaven, where immortals, good people and fairies lived. One day, she accidentally broke a very precious porcelain jar. Angered, the Jade Emperor banished her to live on Earth, where ordinary people lived. She could return to the Heaven, if she contributed a valuable service on Earth.

Chang'e was transformed into a member of a rich farming family. When she was 18, a young hunter named Houyi from another village spotted her. He thought she was a beautiful young woman they became friends.

One day, a strange phenomenon occurred—10 suns arose in the sky instead of one, blazing the Earth, animals and crops. Houyi, an expert archer, stepped forward to try to save the Earth. He successfully shot down nine of the suns, becoming an instant hero. This meant he was able to become king and when he did, he married Chang'e.

But Houyi grew to become greedy and selfish. He sought immortality by ordering an elixir be created to prolong his life. The elixir was in the form of a single pill and when it was almost ready, Chang'e came upon it. She swallowed the pill when she heard him coming, afraid he would see her with it. This angered King Houyi, who chased after his wife. Trying to flee, she jumped out the window of a chamber at the top of the palace and instead of falling; she floated into the sky towards the Moon. King Houyi tried unsuccessfully to shoot her down with arrows. He was enraged that someone felt they could take something of his and decided to chase her.

To be able to chase her, King Houyi ascended to the Sun and built a palace. Houyi is very stubborn and follows Chang'e everyday, trying to catch her. Sometimes Chang'e

becomes tired and the Moon wanes, but then she looks back to see Houyi chasing her and waxes to full strength to avoid getting caught. They are yin and yang.

Chang'e isn't able to get lonely on the Moon, for she is not alone! She has a little cute rabbit by her side. One day three fairy sages disguised themselves as hungry old beggars and ran into Fox, Monkey and Rabbit. The three old beggars asked them for food and both Fox and Monkey shared theirs. Rabbit was starving himself and didn't have anything to give so he threw himself into the fire to make food for the old beggars. The ages were so touched by Rabbit's sacrifice that they brought him back to life and granted him eternal life. Then they sent Rabbit to live in the Moon Palace with Chang'e.

Coyolxauhqui

Coatlicue was the Earth, the mother of Coyolxauhqui, the Moon, and of Centzon Huiznahua, the "Four Hundred of the South" and another name for the Stars. One day, while she was sweeping her temple on top of Coatepec hill, when a little ball of feathers floated down from the sky. She was delighted with it and kept it. The Earth was miraculously impregnated by the little ball of feathers. Coyolxauhqui viewed the pregnancy of her mother as a disgrace and she instigated her brothers, the Stars, to kill her and the baby. Huitzilopochtli, the Sun, jumped from her womb, warned the Earth of the danger and decided to defend his life and that of his mother. When the Moon and the Stars were rushing in to kill the Earth, the sun Huitzilopochtli was born, fully armed for war with a fire serpent that he used to decapitate his treacherous sister. He then threw her down from the top of Coatepec hill and as she fell, the goddess was dismembered with each turn. Huitzilopochtli tossed Coyolxauhqui's head into the sky where it became the moon. He hoped that his mother would find comfort at night by seeing the face of her only daughter in the sky even though she was a traitor.

So the Moon dies every month, defeated by the Sun and cut in pieces. Coyolxauhqui and her dismemberment are the explanation for a celestial phenomenon, in which the moon dies and is born in phases, and so she was found at the foot of the stairway of the Huitzilopochtli temple at the Templo Mayor.