TRADITIONAL LITERATURE

Traditional Literature is also referred to as Folklore or folk Literature. It encompasses the rituals, customs, superstitions, and manners of a particular group that are passed orally or in writing from one generation to the next. It is described as being “a window through which children in today’s world may view cultures of long ago.” The retellings of a tale may differ from the tale due to the oral traditions. The picture book versions of traditional literature list the story as being told by, retold by, etc. There is no actual author.

There are sub-genres that make up traditional literature. These sub genres are:

1. Animal Stories: Deals with Anthropomorphism – The Three bears, Chicken Little, the Lion and the Mouse.
2. Trickster Tales: The story revolves around a trickster, someone who gets others in trouble – Brer Rabbit, Anansi the Siper, Roadrunner.
4. Tall Tales: Highly exaggerated stories, typical American tales – Paul Bunyan and Babe, the Blue Ox, Pecos Bill, Swamp Angel.
5. Cumulative Tales: Composed of repeated lines and additional lines – There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly, The Gingerbread Boy, The Little Red Hen.
6. Fairytales: Magical stories – Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, East of the Sun, West of the Moon.
8. Folktales: Folktales are tied to and reflect a particular culture. Rob Roy (Scottish), dwarves (German), The Little Mermaid (Scandinavian).
10. Ghost Stories: An example of a living folktale, told from person to person with each telling adapted to the occasion.
11. Myths: Stories of gods, goddesses, and heroes of a given culture. They explain the origins of customs and social beliefs – Greek myths, Norse, Native American, African, and Asian.
12. Epics and Heroic Legends: Grew out of mythology, but humans became the heroes – Iliad, Odyssey, The Song of Roland.
CRITERIA FOR SELECTING BOOKS AND AUTHORS:
* The story should be appropriate to the developmental age of the children
* The oral storytelling style of the original tale should be preserved in the book
* The integrity of the original culture of the tale should be retained
* The illustrated versions of traditional tales should be of high quality and provide assistance in interpreting the story, plot, characters and theme

REASONS FOR USING TRADITIONAL LITERATURE WITH CHILDREN:
* Provides entertainment
* Contains the rich heritage of a story
* Tells stories of the human experience
* Kindles the imagination
* Serves as the building blocks for contemporary literature/framework for literature
* Provides a window on diverse cultures
* Carries on the strong oral tradition of storytelling
* Provides moral models for children as the struggle between good and evil is applied to incidents in their own lives

BENEFITS OF EXPOSURE TO TRADITIONAL LITERATURE:
* Tales, verses, and song embody a child’s conception of the world.
* Opportunities to experience fantasy worlds and simultaneously reflect on human conditions.
* Through the experience, young readers can observe the consequences of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, the failures and successes of characters, and their determination to reach their goals.
* Ability to encounter historical and folk heroes from a particular culture.
* Young readers are able to compare and contrast motifs and universal truths valued by various cultures.
* Increased awareness of the literary options available.

TRADITIONAL LITERATURE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN:
A Christmas Carol. Dickens, Charles; Lippincott, 1952.
Curious George. H.A. Rey.Scholastic, 1941.
Madeline. Ludwig Bemelmans. Viking.
Russian Folk Tales. Illustrated by Ivan I. Bilibin. Translated by Robert Chandler.
The True Story of the Three Little Pigs. As told to Jon Scieszka. Illustrated by Lane Smith. Scholastic, 1989.
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, A Commmemorative Pop-Up. Baum, L. Frank; Little Simon, 2000. (This is a terrific pop-up book!)
**Versions of the Cinderella story:**


**This is a small sample of the many versions of the Cinderella story available. There are over 600 versions of this tale.**

**Authors:**

Anderson, Hans Christian                   Ginsburg, Mirra
Aylesworth, Jim                          Grimm, Jakob & Wilhelm
Bierhorst, John                          Kimmel, Eric A.
Climo, Shirley (Cinderella stories)    Langley, Johnathan
Cole, Joanna                            Macdonald, George
Dahl, Roald                             Perrault, Charles
De Paola, Tomie                         Pinkney, Jerry
Demi                                    Scieszka, Jon
Dickens, Charles                       Steptoe, John
Dillon, Diane and Leo
Galdone, Paul

**Web Sites related to traditional Literature:**

http://afsnet.org/sections/children/aesop.htm - This site is dedicated to the Aesop Awards that are given to traditional children’s books. You can find a listing of each years recipients.

http://www.ling.hawaii.edu/faculty/stampe/oral.html - This site offers a listing of traditional books for every culture.

http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/form2.htm - This site has links to other sites and books for each sub-genre within traditional literature.

http://www.geocities.com/paris/jardin/1630/ - This is a great site. You can access many traditional books from this site.