



Lesson Title: Mythology With a New Twist **Target Age:** 9 and above

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Abstract:

People seem to crave rituals in their lives as a form of relaxation and comfort, to maintain a sense of belonging, to validate their identity and to examine their place in the universe. We know that people of all ages respond very positively to hearing and learning about ancient cultures' stories. Another way of involving the audience in a visceral or affective way, while utilizing "minds-on" and even "hands-on" techniques is to use mythology as the content material and develop a ritual around it.

Paper:

There are many ways of building interactive lessons for the planetarium around teaching mythology of the heavens. The standard idea is having students learn or create a myth to tell under the stars. I would like to go over a new idea which employs a technique for involving students more completely by making a ritual out of the storytelling in the planetarium.

The ritual is designed in the following manner: To initiate this activity each student must learn or create a myth to be presented to the class. The class, as a whole, can design the beginning, middle and culminating activities for the ritual. After practicing his/her presentation the student then must chose a length of yarn to hold; a story is sometimes called a "yarn." The yarn should represent the myth in some way, for example in color or length.

The ritual could begin with everyone reciting something like this:

The Earth does not belong to man;
man belongs to the Earth.
Man did not weave the web of life,
he is merely a strand in it.
Whatever he does to the web,
he does to himself.
All things are connected
like the blood which unites one family.
All things are connected.

-Sealth (Chief Seattle)
1854

During the ritual, after telling his or her myth, each storyteller ties his/her piece of yarn to the yarn of the previous storyteller. As each person adds their yarn the group chants "And that is the end of that story, thank you for sharing." The last storyteller ties his yarn to the first piece, forming a circle. The resulting circle represents the group experience.

An end to the ritual could be another chant with hands raised holding the connected yarn:

Coming together is a Beginning

Keeping together is Progress

Working together is Success

-Unknown

The class will need to determine the best way to honor this circle of collective yarns.

For example:

1. put it in a display container in the room;
2. students could take turns taking it home and sharing some yarns with their family;
3. students could make a bulletin board by stapling it on the board along with each person's name and story/poem/song or picture mounted next to *their section* of the yarn;
4. weave it into something;
5. relate it to the food web.....tug on one section and feel the effect on all parts
6. make a story hat (Tie the yarns to the brim-hanging down around the edge-can put story symbols on the yarns);
7. use it to tie a book of stories together;
8. take a picture (to save) and then burn the yarns as another ritual. This sends the stories and thoughts out to connect to the universe.

Hopefully this is an activity that can inspire a new ritual that can be shared in your planetarium. It can be adapted and/or transformed to meet your situation. Please send me some of the ideas you have and I will pass them along to other planetarians!

