

	Lesson Extensions and Activities for <i>Cuckoo</i>
	Age Range: 3 - 10 years
	Reading Is Fundamental
	Google Voyager Folktales Unit

Book Description

“Cuckoo is beautiful. Trouble is, she’s lazy, too. She never does her share of work—that is, until a field fire threatens the season’s seed crop and Cuckoo is the only one who can save it.”

Folktale Background

“*Cuckoo* is an adaptation of a Mayan Indian tale from Mexico. A different interpretation of this Mayan tale entitled ‘The Cuckoo’s Reward’ appears in *Latin American Tales from the Pampas to the Pyramids of Mexico* by Genevieve Barlow (Rand McNally & Company, 1966). The illustrations in *Cuckoo* were inspired by a variety of Mexican crafts and folk art, including cut-paper fiesta banners, tin work, textiles, metal Milagros, clay ‘tree of life’ candelabra, and wooden toys and sculptures.”

Vocabulary

- Caw – the sound of a crow or a similar bird.
- Crow – the loud noise made by roosters.
- Sour – tasting acidic like lemons or vinegar.
- Coo – the soft, gentle sound that a dove makes.
- Hoot – the noise that an owl makes.
- Tunnel – an underground passage dug by a burrowing animal, like a mole.
- Flames – the bright orange-red part of a fire.
- Scorched – burned with flame or heat.
- Raspy – hoarse sounding.

Prior to Reading

- Ask students if they have heard of Mexico. On chart paper, create a Venn diagram and have students share what’s similar about the U.S. and Mexico and what’s unique to each of the countries. Note students’ answers even if they’re incorrect as you will go back and discuss the answers after learning more about the country
- Walk students through the Mexico [Google Voyager Experience](#). Add additional notes to the Venn diagram as you walk through the experience.
- Share with students that this is a folktale based on a Mexican tale. Ask if they’ve heard any other Mexican tales and call on volunteers to share.

While Reading

- As you encounter words that emphasize the types of sounds that different birds make, ask students to act them out. For instance, ask students to “caw” like the parrot, to “crow” like a rooster, etc.
- Stop reading after finishing the page that says, “Early tomorrow we start our seed collecting.” Ask students why they think that the owl wants Cuckoo to rest now if they won’t be collecting seeds until tomorrow.
- Stop reading after finishing the page that says, “Each year, after the field plants dried, the birds collected beans and corn, and pepper, squash and tomato seeds and dropped them on Mole’s hill.” Ask the students why the birds need to collect seeds.
- Stop reading after finishing the page that says, “Cuckoo soon got bored singing to herself.” Ask the students to guess what the red flickering thing is.
- Stop reading after finishing the page that says, “So Cuckoo began.” Ask the students to guess what will happen.

Post-Reading Activities

- Lead a discussion about the tale. Ask students such questions as:
 - Why did the birds not like Cuckoo in the beginning of the story?
 - What did Cuckoo do to change their minds?
 - Which is your favorite of all of the illustrations in the book? Why?
- Have students complete the Criss Cross, Memory Matching, and Word Search puzzles about *Cuckoo* on RIF’s Literacy Central (<https://www.rif.org/Voyager-Stories-Folktales>).
- Assign leveled reading passages from RIF’s Literacy Central based on each student’s reading level (<https://www.rif.org/Voyager-Stories-Folktales>).

Lesson Extensions and Activities

Here are some ways to further explore the story:

Primary Standard for all activities: RL.K.10 (Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.)

- **Math** – Have students use seeds mentioned in the book to solve word problems. Have students work in pairs and provide each pair with a printed copy of the word problems and enough seeds to solve each problem. Have students work together to solve the word problems.
 - Example word problem: The doves collected two bean seeds, one squash seed, and one tomato seed. The owl collected three bean seeds, two squash seeds, and five tomato seeds. The fire burned two bean seeds, three squash seeds, and one tomato seed. How many of each of the seeds do the birds have left?

Objective: Students will be able to use representations to solve addition and subtraction problems.

Standards: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.OA.A.1 (Use addition and subtraction within 20 to solve word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions, e.g., by using objects, drawings, and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem.)

Materials:

- Printouts with word problems related to *Cuckoo*

- Seeds from the plants mentioned in *Cuckoo* (with a labeled reference to help them keep track of which type of seed is which)
 - Pencils
- **Arts** – The art in *Cuckoo* is inspired by Mexican crafts and folk art, including cut-paper fiesta banners called *papel picado*. Teach students about the history of papel picado while having them create banners of their own. Pull facts from such sources as this [mexconnect.com article](#) to influence your discussion. Use such videos as this [one by Crafting Chicks](#) to become comfortable with the process of creating papel picado.

Objective: Students will learn more about the Mexican culture represented in *Cuckoo* through a hands-on craft.

Standards: National Core Arts Standards, Anchor Standard #11 (Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.)

Materials:

- Tissue paper
 - Scissors
 - Twine
 - Clear tape
- **Science** – Help students learn about how seeds grow by having them plant and water their own seeds. Hand out a few seeds per students and a few cups with soil. Provide students with guidance on the care of their type of seed by referencing the back of your packet. After you help student plant their seeds, have students come up with a schedule for watering their plants.

Objective: Students will begin to establish a connection between food and nutrition.

Standards: NSES Science in Life Science Standards Levels K-4 (Characteristics of organisms; Life cycles of organisms; Organisms and environments.)

Materials:

- Seeds from the plants mentioned in *Cuckoo*
 - Dixie cups for planting seeds
 - Soil for planting seeds
 - Tape to label each seed with a student's name
- **Social Skills and Writing** – Discuss with students why the birds need to start collecting seeds now for the next season. Have students think about what they need to do this summer to prepare for the next school year. Instruct them to work in pairs to create a to-do list that will help them prepare for the next school year.

Once they've completed their lists, assign each pair a number so that they can present their list to the class and explain why they added each item to their list. Instruct students to cross anything off their list that's a repeat from what the pairs that went before them presented. While the students present, have a student write the new items on the board to create one master list for the class.

Objective: Students will use the written and spoken word to plan for their next school year.

Standards: SL.K.6 (Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings and ideas clearly.)

Materials:

- Journals
- Pens

- **Author Study/Compare and Contrast** – Compare other styles of illustrations to those in *Cuckoo*. Provide each student with a copy of another book that you have in your classroom that has a different artistic style. Have students look through the book and compare the illustrations to what they see in *Cuckoo* through completing a Venn diagram.

Objective: Students will compare illustrations tale using an interactive Venn Diagram.

Standards: National Core Arts Standards, Anchor Standard #7 (Perceive and analyze artistic work.) National Core Arts Standards, Anchor Standard #8 (Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.), and National Core Arts Standards, Anchor Standard #9 (Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.)

Material List:

- Copies of illustrated books
- Venn Diagrams printed on paper
- Pencils