Wycinanki and Polish Folktales

An Integrated Art and Literature Lesson

Grade Level: 3-8

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Objectives

- Students will use library and Internet resources to locate Polish folktales.
- Students will read and re-tell Polish folktales.
- Students will gain an appreciation of Wycinanki (Polish paper cutting).
- Students will identify and create a symmetrical or an asymmetrical design.
- Students will identify and use positive and negative space.

Art Materials

- Colored papers (origami, gift wrap, craft paper, colored Xerox paper)
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Elmer’s Glue

Resources

- The Dancing Man by Ruth Bornstein
- Collections of folktales
- World map
- Map of Poland
- Wycinanki examples

Reading Activities

- Provide background information on Poland.
- Have students locate Poland on a world map and Baltic Sea on a map of Poland.
- Read aloud The Dancing Man.
- Discuss how folklore, including stories and folk art techniques, is passed from generation to generation.
- Read aloud several short folktale selections.
- Review characteristics of the folktale genre.
- Model oral retellings of the tales.
Wycinanki Procedure

- Provide background information on the folk art of Wycinanki. Point out regional differences in examples shown.
- Have class brainstorm visual images from Polish folktales read.
- Have each student select favorite folktale.
- Draw 3-5 thumbnail sketches using visual imagery from their folktale.
- Select best design.
- Teacher demonstrates techniques of Wycinanki styles.
- Create Wycinanki.
- Oral retelling of folktale and presentation of finished product.

Key Terms

- Folklore
- Folk art
- Folktale genre
- Wycinanki
- Symmetrical
- Asymmetrical
- Positive and negative space

Elements of Design

- Shape
- Space
- Color