

# Study Guide For Teachers

## TAHIRA in *FOLKTALE FUN*

Presented by

Young Audiences

(866) 500-9265

[www.yanj.org](http://www.yanj.org)

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### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Clever spiders, signifying monkeys and grinnin' buzzards are just some of the intriguing characters in the folktales told by TAHIRA. *Folktales Fun* is an interactive program ideal for preschoolers and lower elementary school-aged children. Delivered in her signature high-energy style, TAHIRA captivates young audiences while imparting universal values such as appreciating differences and being kind with your words.

### LEARNING GOALS

- To engage students in the art of storytelling
- To introduce students to how folktales are used as a tool to teach values
- To demonstrate how culture is expressed through folktales

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Folktales can be found in cultures all over the world. Universally, folktales are stories that are passed down orally and contain a moral lesson. These moral lessons mirror the values in that particular community. Folktales are often a means of handing down traditions and customs from one generation to the next. By reading the folktales of a people, one can have a window into that culture's history, principles and ideals.

The story structure and language in a folktale are often very simple in order to be understood by the youngest listeners. However, the subject matter can be very complex and can involve long withstanding values of the community. Since the tales are usually told orally, there are often several existing versions of the same story, yet the moral usually remains constant.

### VOCABULARY WORDS

**Jali/Jaliya:** Master storytellers/historians of West African countries, responsible for passing on the history and culture of their communities.

**Version:** A different way of telling a traditional or familiar story.

**Dilemma Tales:** Stories that present a problem that is then left to the audience to discuss before the outcome is told.

**Call and Response:** Traditional African singing style: one person sings a line and a chorus responds. Call and response is a style of singing which has survived in African-American street games and choral singing.

**Folktale:** a tale or legend originating and traditional among a people or folk, especially one forming part of the oral tradition of the common people.

**Brer :** means brother in African American dialect.

**Trickster:** a supernatural figure appearing in various guises and typically engaging in mischievous activities, important in the folklore and mythology of many primitive peoples and usually conceived as a culture hero.

**Moral:** rules of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong.

## **BEFORE THE PROGRAM**

1. Read several folktales with your class. If you can, include an Anansi story, a tall tale, and a story that explains natural phenomena, such as "Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears." Try to find two versions of the same story. Have the children listen and make comparisons.
2. Encourage students to tell— not read— a story with which they are familiar. Discuss the differences between telling and reading a story.
3. Have your children brainstorm what they think a storyteller might do to make a story interesting to an audience. Encourage them to watch and listen carefully during the performance to see what TAHIRA does to make the stories interesting and fun.
4. Many of the stories and songs that TAHIRA shares are passed down through the generations.
  - Discuss how cultural history and ethnic traditions are preserved within a family.
  - Ask students to share any stories, songs or special customs particular to their own families or culture.
  - Point out how the oral tradition plays a vital role in defining history and heritage.

## **ARTIST INFORMATION**

TAHIRA is a multi-talented storyteller, relating African and African American stories while drawing upon her cultural background and personal experiences. She is filled with passion and enthusiasm for the content of her stories and their inherent cultural messages. Whether performing her original works, or her vast repertoire of stories from the African oral traditions, TAHIRA brings to her audiences messages of courage, hope and spiritual strength. Blending song, poetry and story, her high-energy performance delights listeners of all ages. TAHIRA is an advocate of using the arts to bring about social change. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Temple University's School of Communication and Theatre. She was awarded a fellowship from the Delaware Division of the Arts for her significant contribution to oral literature. TAHIRA is the Past-President of Keepers of the Culture, a Philadelphia Afro-centric storytelling group, and a member of the National Association of Black Storytellers, the National Storytelling Association and Patchwork: A Storytelling Guild.

## **AFTER THE PROGRAM**

1. Discuss the specific stories and songs in *Gift of Story* that held the students' attention most.
2. Ask students if any of the stories had lessons or left them with something to think about. Ask them to identify the stories and the lessons learned.
3. Ask how the performance would have been different if the storyteller had sat down and read the same stories.
4. Have students illustrate one of the stories heard.
5. Have your students think of a special message or lesson they would like to share, then create a story that illustrates that lesson and read it or tell it to the class. See if the class can guess the lesson or message before the student reveals it.
6. Make a story cloth. Have the students select a story of their choice. Students may draw or cut out construction paper figures that represent characters or aspects of the story selected. Sew or glue each figure on a large piece of burlap. Students can use the story cloth to retell the story to another class. Story cloths can be displayed.
7. Using a story from the performance or another of their choice, students may act out a story in the form of a skit or using puppets.
8. Working individually, have the students reflect on their lives and apply the lesson of one of the stories to real life. Using a real-life scenario, have the students write descriptions of how the story fits a situation they have encountered or may encounter in the future. What insight does the story provide in assisting a person to do the right thing? Ask for volunteers to share what they wrote.

## **RESOURCES**

### **REPERTOIRE**

*A Story, A Story.* An original son by TAHIRA.  
*Signifying Monkey.* Sto'etry by Oscar Brown, Jr.  
*Strange Animals.* West African Folktale adapted by TAHIRA  
*Jealous Farmer.* Sto'etry by Mitch Capel  
*Sunu.* Traditional song from Guinea, West Africa  
*Will You Share Your Light.* Original song/poem by TAHIRA

### **BOOKS**

*Talk that Talk: An Anthology of African-American Storytelling.* Marian Barnes  
*Jump Up and Say.* Linda and Clay Goss  
*A Treasury of African Folklore.* Harold Courlander

### **Recordings**

*Rise to Freedom* by TAHIRA & *Gifted Children* by TAHIRA