

The Stolen Smells: A Lesson in Jurisprudence

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Grade Level: Suitable for grade three (nine-year-olds) through adults, although the lesson will need adjusting according to the maturity of the learners.
Subject: Literature
Strategies: *Think/Pair/Share, Readers' Theater, and Dramatic Roles*
Time needed: One class period at least, but may be lengthened

Introduction and Motivation: An important aspect of critical thinking is to be able to make a claim and support it logically with reasons and evidence. This lesson engages students in a controversial issue, and challenges them to take a position and defend it against friendly competition.

The lesson involves:

- critical listening, following the elements of a story;
- oral disputation;
- argumentative writing; and
- descriptive vocabulary.

Students find it easier to write out an argumentative essay if they have participated in a spirited verbal debate first; and while the term “argument” is often used in a negative way as the verbal counterpart of a brawl, students need to learn to argue in the more formal sense of marshaling evidence logically to support a claim, and responsibly considering challenges to their line of reasoning.

The story used in the lesson is “The Stolen Smells,” a folktale told in Peru. It has variations from many places, including a Japanese version in which the two characters in conflict are a poor student and the owner of a noodle shop below his apartment. It is said that some versions of the story were used to train arbiters in oral cultures that did not have schools of law.

Objectives: As a result of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Follow the unfolding of a story by making predictions;
- Defend a claim with reasons in an oral debate; and
- Develop and use vocabulary to describe human characteristics.

Prerequisites: What must a student already know and be able to do in order to learn successfully from this lesson?

The prerequisites are minimal. It will help to explain to students where Peru is if they do not know, what the work of a traditional baker is, and what a judge or village magistrate does.

Resources and Time Management: How will resources and time be allocated to the activities?

The text of the story (see below). Also see time indications below.

Grouping: How will the students be grouped for instruction?

Students will work as a whole group, in pairs, and in “corners” groups, in which the class is divided into four separate groups. Students will also work independently at writing up their **Character Webs**.

The Lesson Proper

Evocation: The lesson will begin with an **advance organizer**—the teacher introduces the story to follow. It is a folk tale. It is set in a village in Peru.

The teacher moves on to a **quick write**. The students are asked, “Write for three minutes about an example in which ‘the punishment fits the crime.’”

After the students have written, the teacher invites three students to share with the whole class.

Realization of Meaning: Interactive Storytelling

Interactive Storytelling is essentially the same as the **Directed Listening-Thinking Activity**, except that the teacher tells the story instead of reading it aloud. The folk tale, “The Stolen Smells,” is told by the teacher, who has, of course, learned and practiced telling the story beforehand. Before telling each section, the teacher asks the students to predict what they expect to happen, and checks their predictions about the previous section. The teacher accepts all answers without correcting them or acknowledging if they are correct, though the teacher may sometimes ask, “Why do you think so?” (The stopping places and questions are marked on the text, below).

Realization of Meaning: “Corners.”

The teacher stops the telling at the place marked in the text below, and points out that the judge has several choices. The teacher writes the following options on the chalkboard:

1. The judge makes the poor man pay the baker.
2. The judge punishes the baker for bringing a frivolous charge.
3. The judge throws them both out of his office.
4. The judge does something else—what?

The students are asked to list the numbers of the outcomes in the order in which they think they are most likely to occur. If they choose the fourth option, they must decide what it is.

Then the teacher asks students to go to one of the corners of the room—1, 2, 3, or 4. If too many students go to any one corner, the teacher asks some students to go further down their lists and choose different corners so that the numbers in each corner are roughly the same.

The students in each corner compare what they think, including their reasons for thinking so. Then they prepare to persuade the other students of their view.

The students in each corner make a statement, and after a representative from each corner makes theirs, students continue advocating for their views, and attempt to persuade other students to come over and join them. The teacher encourages students to change corners if they are persuaded by other corners’ arguments.

Once the debate has run its course, or after about 10-12 minutes, the teacher finishes telling the story.

Reflection: Return to Quick Write, and Character Map.

Now the teacher reminds the students of the **Quick Write** they did at the beginning of the lesson, and asks them to compare their accounts of punishments fitting crimes to the justice that was meted out by the judge in “The Stolen Smells.”

For the **Character Map**, the teacher asks the students to write a character’s name in a circle in the middle of a sheet of paper, then as “satellites” around the first circle to write at least three adjectives that describe the character. Finally, as satellites of the adjectives, they should write at least two examples of behavior that justifies each adjective.

Assessment:

The formative assessment can be done by listening for the quality of students’ predictions during the **Interactive Storytelling** and also for the quality of their arguments during the debate. Their character maps can be assessed for proof that they understood the story.

Extension:

As an extension of the lesson, the students may collect more folk tales that teach moral lessons.

The Text:**The Stolen Smells**

In a village in Peru there lived a baker. Every morning he rose many hours before the sun and went to his bakery. He built the fire, mixed the dough, waited for the dough to rise--hours before the first customer came into his shop. The baker felt sorry for himself. He was jealous of his customers. Why should he rise so early and work so hard? At least people paid for his bread. Except for one person...

[Pause. "What do we know so far? What do we think will happen?"]

Also in that village lived a poor man. His job of picking up trash earned him only a few pennies a day. His family needed those pennies, because he had many children. The poor man's one pleasure was to stand for a few minutes each morning near the door of the bakery, and smell the fresh-baked bread. The baker saw the poor man standing near his door, enjoying the smells of his bread without paying. Day after day the baker watched the poor man, and his anger grew and grew.

[Pause. "Which of our predictions are coming true? What do we know so far? What do we think will happen next?"]

Finally one day he ran outside and grabbed the poor man by the front of his shirt.

"You're stealing my smells!" he shouted.

"What?" said the frightened poor man.

"Yes, you're stealing my smells. And now you are going to pay!" said the furious baker.

[Pause. "Which of our predictions are coming true? What do we know so far? What do we think will happen next?"]

He dragged the poor man down the street toward the house of the village judge. The people on the street stared in amazement as the baker pulled the frightened pauper along the sidewalk.

The baker knocked on the judge's door.

"Come in," came the voice from inside. The baker pushed the poor man into the room.

"What do you want? What are you doing here?" asked the judge, looking up from his desk.

"Your honor," said the furious baker, "This man has been stealing his smells!"

"What?" asked the judge. "Explain this to me."

"Every day I get up hours before the rooster crows. I build my the fire, I mix my dough, I wait for the dough to rise, and I bake the bread, all while others sleep. This man stands by the door every morning and enjoys the smells. He steals the fruits of my hard work, without paying a penny."

"Is this true?" said the judge to the poor man.

"I enjoy the smells, it is true. But I have only a few pennies in my pocket, and I cannot afford to buy his bread," said the poor man.

"You have pennies in your pocket?" said the judge.

"Yes," answered the poor man. "But they are all that I have."

"Give them to me," said the judge.

"Please sir, no. My family needs them. We are very poor..."

[Pause. Now the teacher leads the students in the "Corners" activity (see above). Afterwards, the story continues to the conclusion]

“Give them to me,” the judge repeated. So the poor man handed the pennies to the judge. The judge held the coins in two hands.

To the baker the judge said, “This man stole your smells?”

“Yes,” said the baker, smiling as he waited for his reward.

“Then here is your payment.”

The judge shook the coins and made them jingle in his cupped hands. “The sound of money is fair trade for the smell of bread,” said the judge. “Court is adjourned!”