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URBAN MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES

INTRODUCTION

Urban myths or legends are a kind of modern folklore consisting of stories thought to be factual by the people circulating them. The term urban is used to separate the stories from traditional, older folktales. The urban legends are often spread through email or are written up as factual in newspapers. The stories usually happened to a “friend of a friend”, a common term used in telling the stories. The stories also tend to be set in modern times. Many of them caution against modern inventions

The urban legend phenomenon is universal in nature. Every culture has there own, some of the motifs are universal in nature and some specific to that particular culture.

Urban myths or legends are complete stories. Each contains at least one character and a plot. There is a wide variety to the plots. There are cautionary tales, which warn of something, horror stories and humorous stories. Among the cautionary tales is the genre of stories that deal with modern appliances.

The urban myths lend themselves to be shared because of the humor or horror. In the telling, from one person to another, exaggerations occur. All of the urban myths or legends are believed to be factual and true. It can be very hard to dispel the belief in the urban myth. Even when proven to be false, urban myths and legends linger and can become part of the cultural base of a county.

PURPOSE

Students will compare the urban myths and legends of Korea and the United States, noting the similarities and differences of each culture.

To expose students to the universality and differences of an East Asian country.

To make students aware of cultural connections.

To improve reading and expand vocabulary.

To practice critical thinking skills through analysis of data.

To familiarize students with internet resources.

DURATION

2-4 days

STANDARDS

Social Studies Academic Content Standards K-12

Peoples in Societies: Grade 9-10, Grade 12

Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices and products of cultural, ethnic and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional and global settings.

Benchmarks

Grade 9-10

C: Analyze the ways that contact between peoples of different cultures result in Exchanges of cultural practices

3:E Explain how advances in communication and transportation have impacted: Popular Culture

Cultures 1. Identify the perspectives of diverse cultural groups when analyzing current issues

Diffusion 3/E: Popular culture

Grade 11-12

A: Analyze how issues may be viewed differently by various cultural groups

Cultures 1. Identify the perspectives of diverse cultural groups when analyzing current issues

English Academic Content Standards K-12

Reading Process: Concepts of print, comprehension strategies and self-monitoring strategies.
Grade 9-10: 1-5

Reading Applications: Literary text. Grade 9-12: 1-6, 9-10

Writing process. Grade 9-12: 1, 8, 10

Communication: oral and visual. Grade 9-12: 1, 9

PRE-ASSESSMENT

Ask students what an urban legend/myth is. Have them verbalize their answers.

Ask students if they know any urban legends from other countries. If so, ask them to, in 1 paragraph format, write the basics of the urban legend/myth.

Ask students to point out where Korea is on a map. Ask what they know about Korea and its culture.

VOCABULARY

A vocabulary handout will be used to familiarize students to key terminology.

MATERIALS

Handouts of the urban legend “Hot Dog” and “Tanning”.

Article from Korea Herald: July 28, 1997. “Fan death”

Vocabulary Handout

Graphic Organizer handouts

Collaboration Rubric handout

ACTIVITIES

Students will listen to the teacher storytell several urban legends that have modern appliances as a basis for the story.

Students will read the urban legend handouts and the article from the Korea Herald.

The teacher will go over the vocabulary handout with the students.

Students will divide into small groups and discuss urban legends that they have heard. They will pick one urban legend and write it out using a story frame summary.

Given a list of websites, students will go online and investigate the origins and authenticity of the Korean fan death legends and a United States appliance oriented urban legend. Students will transfer the website addresses they used to a word document. They will copy and paste

scientific reasoning as to the truth of both legends to the same word document. The students will print a copy of the word document for the teacher.

Students will discuss the idea of urban legends/myths with a family member/friend and gather information about an urban legend/myth that that person shares using a Who-What-Where-When-How graphic organizer.

ASSESSMENT

1. Assess students' knowledge of the vocabulary list with a fill in the blank and matching vocabulary quiz. Students will receive a 0-10 score for correct answers.
2. Students will pick an urban legend out of the books available or online and complete a handout of the story. The handout will be graded on: did student list the device, the plot, characters and what kind of urban legend was chosen.
3. Students will write a 1 page synopsis of an urban legends/myths that a family member/friend shared with them, using proper English. If the student did not collect an urban legend from family or friends, the teacher will be assign an urban legend to the student.
4. Student participation will be graded using a collaboration rubric.

WEBSITES

http://www.metro.co.uk/weird/article.html?in_article_id=17617&in_page_id=2&expand=true
The Metro is a United Kingdom news site. One of the sections covers "Weird" news. This internet address takes you straight to a July 14, 2006 article on Korean fan deaths.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fan_death
Wikipedia is an internet encyclopedia that gives a detailed overview of a subject.

http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Fan_death
This is an online dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopedia. The myth of fan death is discussed and includes professional doctor's opinions about "fan death".

http://dmoz.org/Society/Folklore/Literature/Urban_Legends/
This site gives a compilation of other websites that are usable to find specific urban legends. It can also connect to such fun and interesting sites as the "Darwin Awards".

http://www.netscrap.com/netscrap.cfm?cat_show=Urban%20Folklore
Under the heading Urban Folklore is a list of approximately 40 specific urban legends. Click on a story title and the urban legend story will be shown.

<http://www.fandeath.net/index.htm>

This 2005 website was started by Robin Prime, an English teacher in Korea, after he heard from his students about “fan deaths”. There’s a definition of fan death and how it happens along with arguments for and against the belief in it. There’s also information on other Korean urban myths and misinformation.

http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/dogs/a/microwaved_pet.htm

This IS the ultimate urban legends site, with references to current hoaxes, a top 25 legends list and a topics breakdown of legends. Students can find information on a myriad of urban legends. This specific address goes straight to a micro waved pet story.

http://www.smecc.org/microave_oven_legends.htm

The home address for this site is run by the Southwest Museum of Engineering, Communications and Computation in Glendale, Arizona. This specific reference goes to a micro wave oven dog story.

REFERENCES

Brunvand, Jan Harold. (2004). Be afraid, be very afraid: the book of scary urban legends.

New York: Norton, W.W. & Company, Inc.

Professor Brunvand is the leading authority on urban legends. This book is a collection of the scariest of all the urban legends narrated with genuine creepiness.

Brunvand, Jan Harold. (20010). Too good to be true: the colossal book of urban legends.

New York: Norton, W.W. & Company, Inc.

This is an anthology of urban legends collected by Professor Brunvand. Arranged by themes, the stories also reflect how the legends have changed over time.

Brunvand, Jan Harold. (1989). The vanishing hitchhiker: American urban legends and their meanings. New York: Norton, W.W. & Company, Inc.

This collection of urban legends relates specifically to the United States and was the first published collection of urban myths.

Craughwell, Thomas. (1999). Alligators in the sewer and 222 other urban legends. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc.

Divided by genre, this book covers “absolutely true” urban legends. Variations on a theme are also covered.

Holt, David. (1999). Spiders in the hairdo: modern urban legends. David Holt and Bill Mooney. Little Rock: August House, Inc.

50 urban legends are covered in this collection. The stories are grouped by category. The cover art is great and the stories are told at an easily readable level.

Zimmerman, Keith. (2005). *Mythbusters: the explosive truth behind 30 of the most perplexing urban legends of all time*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

This book will hook students because it's a tie-in to Discovery Channel's television show Mythbusters. It's an excellent scientific resource to use when discussing a variety of urban legends.

Korean Fan Death

Excerpt from the July 28, 1997, edition of the *Korea Herald*, an English-language newspaper:

"The heat wave which has encompassed Korea for about a week, has generated various heat-related accidents and deaths. At least 10 people died from the effects of electric fans which can remove oxygen from the air and lower body temperatures...

On Friday in eastern Seoul, a 16-year-old girl died from suffocation after she fell asleep in her room with an electric fan in motion. The death toll from fan-related incidents reached 10 during the past week. Medical experts say that this type of death occurs when one is exposed to electric fan breezes for long hours in a sealed area. "Excessive exposure to such a condition lowers one's temperature and hampers blood circulation. And it eventually leads to the paralysis of heart and lungs," says a medical expert.

"To prevent such an accident, one should keep the windows open and not expose oneself directly to fan air," he advised.

http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Fan_death

The Fatal Tan: As told by Kayla Pruett.

A young woman was approaching her wedding day. She decided that she'd look better in her wedding dress if she had a little color, so a week before the wedding she went to a tanning salon. The salon staff, however, told her that for her own safety, she could only tan for thirty minutes a day. After she'd tanned for her thirty minutes, she decided it wasn't enough, so she went to another tanning salon the same day to tan. They told her the same thing. She still wasn't tan enough after that thirty minutes, so she went to a third tanning salon, and a fourth.

She did this for the next four days. Even though she was getting a little bit s red, she kept thinking how good she'd look in her wedding dress.

The day before her wedding, she was found dead. Her internal organs had all burnt up from the tanning beds.

The "Hot Dog"

A friend of a friend had a grandmother who was a little bit "dotty." One day, Grandma had just bathed her miniature poodle, Pierre, and was about to towel-dry him when the phone rang. It was her daughter, reminding her that they had arranged to meet for lunch a half hour earlier. Grandma apologized for being late and said she'd be there as quickly as she could.

As she began towel-drying Pierre, it dawned on her that there was a quicker way to do it: the microwave. So she put her beloved pet inside the oven, set the dial to "defrost" and switched it on.

A half a minute later, as Grandma was donning her coat to leave, she heard a muffled explosion in the kitchen.

Pierre the poodle was no more.

<http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/bltan.htm>

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW

Topic: _____

Who?	What?
When?	Where?
Why?	How?

STORY FRAME SUMMARY

Name: _____ Period _____

Title of story _____

In this story, the problem begins when _____

After this, _____

Then, _____

Finally _____

Student Name _____
Period _____

URBAN LEGEND _____

Origins: _____

Motif: _____

Device: _____

Characters: _____

Website/Book: _____

Student Name _____
Period: _____

Collaboration Rubric

This is what you will be graded on for group discussions

4 - Thorough Understanding

- Consistently and actively works toward group goals.
- Is sensitive to the feelings and learning needs of group members.
- Willingly accepts and fulfills individual role within the group.
- Consistently and actively contributes knowledge, opinions, and skills.
- Values the knowledge, opinion and skills of all group members encouraging their contribution.

3 - Good Understanding

- Works toward group goals without prompting.
- Accepts and fulfills individual role within the group.
- Shows sensitivity to the feelings of others.

2 - Satisfactory Understanding

- Works toward group goals with occasional prompting.
- Contributes to the group with occasional prompting.
- Shows some sensitivity to the feelings of others.

1 - Needs Improvement

- Doesn't work toward group goals.
 - Participates only when prompted.
 - Needs reminders to be sensitive to the feelings of others.
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