



Yeh – Shen

A Cinderella Story from China

Yeh-Shen dates to *the Miscellaneous Record of Yu Yang* as it first appeared during the T'ang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) It dates 1,000 years before the oldest European version.

Yeh-Shen Mirrors the Chinese Culture

Cultural aspects that are found in the story

- Reverence for ancestors
- Symbol of the fish – hope of prosperity
- Acceptance of men as wise in society
- Feet are a beautiful part of a woman's body – small feet beautiful and feminine
- Festivals important part of Chinese culture
- Gold was considered the color for royalty – gold slippers
- Bones of fish filled with the spirit

Comparison with well-known Cinderella version

Story Title	Author	Setting
<i>Yeh-Shen</i>	Retold by Ai – Ling Louie	dim past Southern China
Characters	Hero/Heroine	Villain
Yeh-Shen Stepmother Stepsister Wu Prince Spirit man fish	Yeh-Shen	Stepmother

Problem	Solution	Magic by
Stepmother kills her only friend, the fish	Yeh-Shen goes to the festival, loses her slipper which the King finds. King marries her. Stepmother and sister are crushed to death in shower of stones.	Fish bones
Cultural Aspects	Cultural Aspects	Words in Spanish
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -during the T'ang dynasty -father had two wives -importance of the fish -spring festival -living in caves -written in panels like a folding painted screen -fish illustration on every page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -illustrations in the book - festival meet the person to marry -tiny feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mágico – magic madrstra – stepmother hermanastra – stepsister amigo – friend ropa fina – fine clothes zapatilla – slipper rey – king pez – fish pies – feet

<http://www.myseveralworlds.com/2007/08/02/yeh-shen-the>

Extended Activities

<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/china/literature/cinderella.htm> - several extended activities in a variety of subject areas

Architecture – create a pavilion or pagoda where the king in Yeh-Shen might have lived

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304_cinderella_yehShen.pdf

Social Studies

Celebrations and Holidays – villagers were invited to a festival. Research the holidays and festivals in China.

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304_cinderella_yehShen.pdf

Chinese culture through Cinderella – complete lesson plan

Language Arts

Vocabulary activities, comprehension questions, crosswords, quiz

http://www.abcteach.com/free/b/book_yehshe_upperelem.pdf

Writing - The Chinese write in “characters”. These “characters” represent words. Research the Chinese characters and then invent your own set of characters to write a simple story.

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304_cinderella_yehShen.pdf

Discussion topics for during / after reading:

- Do you know the story of Cinderella? What is it?
- Discuss the concept of different cultures telling the same story set within their own context.
- If you had a magic fish/ fairy godmother, what would you ask for?

Compare and contrast several versions of Cinderella from several countries

<http://asiasociety.org/education-learning/resources-schools/elementary-lesson-plans/twice-upon-time-multi-cultural-cinderella>

Culture

Compare the versions of Cinderella from the different cultures. Following are some questions to ask children about the various versions to help them compare culture:

1. What caused [the Cinderella character] to have a lowly position in the family?
2. What shows that [the Cinderella character] has a lowly position in the household?
3. How is [the Cinderella character] related to other household members?
4. What happens to keep [the Cinderella character] away from the ball?
5. How does [the Cinderella character] receive her wishes or transformation?
6. Where does [the Cinderella character] meet the prince?
7. What is the test signifying the rightful [Cinderella character]?
8. What else happens to the stepsisters?"

(Adapted from Donna Norton – *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introduction to Children's Literature*)

Higher Level Thinking Skills

Venn Diagram – Compare and contrast different cultural versions with Yeh-Shen

<http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Cind.%20%26Yeh%20Shen%20Lesson.html>

Graphic for comparing Yeh-Shen and Cinderella

<http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Cind.%20%26%20Yeh.%20Graph.%20Org.html>

Art

- Make a mobile with items from the book - magic fish, gold shoe, etc.
- Write a letter from Ya Shen to the magic fish, telling him what has happened to her since the end of the book, and illustrate.