Objectives

- Listen and respond to a Paiute story
- Explore art making, using chalk or crayons
- Create a project depicting one of the scenes in the book

Background

Storytelling has been and continues to be a powerful tool used by Native American tribes to pass down cultural values, beliefs, and traditions. The winter season for many tribes is the time to gather and tell stories. The stories are passed down from one generation to the next and bind the members of the tribe together. Most stories teach a lesson or explain how things came to be. Entertaining your audience while sharing stories is a key element to this oral tradition. The Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah is pleased to share this book with the children of Utah. It is their hope that the book will be used to open doors to studying the ways of the Paiute and also to study the wonders of the sky.

Materials

- Book: Why the Moon Paints Her Face Black
- Black construction paper (9 X 12)
- Construction paper crayons
- Oil pastels or chalk pastels
- Hand wipes

Images from the Museum Permanent Collection

- Curtis Yanito, Indian Way, 1994, ceramic
- Wulf Erich Barsch, In the Valley of the Sun and the Moon: Snow Canyon, 2000, oil on canvas
- Leo R. Platero, Rabbit Brush, 1994, oil on canvas mounted

Images from SMA Education Copyright Archives

- Gilmore Scott, She’ll Bring the Rains, 2017, acrylic on canvas

Utah Core Standards

Visual Art Core:
- 2.V.CR.5 Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork
- 3.V.CR.1 Elaborate on an imaginative idea and apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process
- 4.V.R.2 Talk about the elements an artist uses to convey a message in an artwork
- 4.V.CO.3 Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions
- 5.V.R.1 Compare one’s own interpretation of a work of art with the interpretation of others, and identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery
- 6.V.R.4 Interpret art by distinguishing relevant contextual information, and by analyzing subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed

Social Studies Core:
- Standard 2. Objective 1.b: Explore points of view about life in Utah from a variety of cultural groups using primary source documents
- Standard 2. Objective 2.a: Explore cultural influences from various groups found in Utah today (e.g. food, music, religion, dress, festivals)

Language Arts:
- Reading: Literature Standard 7
- Speaking and Listening Standard 2
- Speaking and Listening Standard 5
Learning Activity

Hand out a blank piece of black construction paper. Put crayons and chalk pastels out for students to share.

Introduce the book Why the Moon Paints Her Face Black to the students.

**Script:** We are going to read a Paiute tale transcribed by an author. Transcribe means to write thoughts, stories, and speech in printed form. The author, Chloe Valentine Brent, listened to Eleanor Tom, a Paiute elder, tell a story her grandmothers used to tell her. Ms. Brent wrote the story down, working hard to write with all the imagery that the story generates when told aloud.

As I read the story, close your eyes and listen carefully. Pay attention to the images that come to your mind as I read. You will be given an opportunity to put the images down on paper after our reading.

Read the story while the students listen with their eyes closed. After the reading, instruct the students to recreate the images that came to their minds. They can concentrate on one particular image or share several images on the paper. Give students time to work on their art. Listen to the story on CD told in Paiute by Eleanor Tom.

Encourage the students to explore ways to enhance their art. Students can use either crayon or pastel to create their image.

**Crayon:**
Layering your crayons on top of one another creates more depth to your art. Begin with a lighter undertone, and layer darker colors on top.

Crayons will resist one another if too many layers are put down. Because of the wax content, crayons are an excellent medium for scratching and etching out lines and details.

Using a white crayon to outline lightly can help you organize and compose your art making.

**Chalk or oil pastel:**
Blend chalk pastels by laying down colors next to each other. Use your finger, a tissue, or a Qtip to blend.

Conclusion

Have students hang their art up in the same sequence used in the story. Hold an impromptu silent art walk where students silently view the art created.

Encourage students to analyze components of the art, interpret meaning, and reflect on their response to the art. Hold a short discussion about the art.
Extension Activities

This story can be used as a springboard into deeper learning of science core subjects such as these:

Introducing second graders to the processes of observing, recording, and recognizing objects and patterns in the night sky.

Guiding third graders’ learning about the spherical shape of the moon and earth, and about how the rotation of the earth on its axis makes the sun and moon appear as if they are moving through the sky.

Developing sixth graders’ working understanding of the cyclic patterns of lunar phases, eclipses of the sun and moon, and seasons.

Variations

The lesson can also be used to start or continue your classroom dialogue about how stories can contribute to bridge building between diverse cultures:

- Ask students to relate what stories are handed down in their families. Compare and contrast the stories with this Paiute story.
- Write a story together as a class that explains a natural phenomenon.
- Seek out other Native American stories to share with students.
- Create and present art that conveys meaning of a Paiute tale.
- Listen to a story and make connections using visual presentations.
- Explore the cultural traditions of storytelling.

Additional Sources

The book *Why the Moon Paints Her Face Black* can be purchased at Capitol Reef Natural History Museum Bookstore or the second website:

- [http://www.capitolreefnha.org/product.cfm?id=0FBB40B3-CC45-C4A7-715AA2DF5841928D](http://www.capitolreefnha.org/product.cfm?id=0FBB40B3-CC45-C4A7-715AA2DF5841928D)

This is a powerful opinion piece written by Joseph Bruchac on the relevancy of oral storytelling in indigenous cultures: [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jul/29/lasting-power-oraltradition](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jul/29/lasting-power-oraltradition)


Chloe Valentine Brent’s story on writing the book: [http://www.usu.edu/today/index.cfm?id=52581](http://www.usu.edu/today/index.cfm?id=52581)
Wulf Erich Barsch, *In the Valley of the Sun and the Moon: Snow Canyon*, 2000, oil on canvas
Gilmore Scott, She’ll Bring the Rains, 2017, acrylic on canvas
Leo R. Platero, *Rabbit Brush*, 1994, oil on canvas mounted