

Dear Educator:

Thank you for participating in Purdue's Big Read! We have been teaching the Big Read since 2019 with Emily Wilson's *The Odyssey*.

*The Monkey King* is a tale of adventure, wit, and hijinks. We think your students will find it entertaining and different from traditional classroom readings.

Our lessons are designed to enrich your study of the novel with an eye toward culture, style, genre, and influence. While our classes are 45-minutes, these lessons are easily adaptable to your teaching context, so adjust and use freely to fit your own classroom needs. We arranged these in an order that makes sense for our students, but many of the lessons could be used at any time during the course of your novel study.

Be sure to check out the [Events](#) tab on the Big Read website as some of our lessons utilize materials that will be featured. Our students have enjoyed participating in virtual and in-person events, and while this may not be possible depending upon your location, some of the event materials, such as podcasts, could be incorporated into your classroom lessons.

We hope you find these helpful and enjoy cloud-jumping your way through this adventurous tale!

Sincerely,

Liz Dixon & Rachael Sandberg

World Literature Teachers

West Lafayette Jr./Sr. High School

# Archetypes: The Hero's Journey

## Teacher Guide

### Standard(s) addressed:

- 9-10.RC.1: Analyze what a text says both explicitly and implicitly (e.g., inferences and interpretations) by citing strong and thorough textual evidence.
- 9-10.RC.5: Analyze a series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

### Concepts and skills:

- Archetype
- Joseph Campbell's Monomyth or Hero's Journey
- Character Archetypes related to the Hero's Journey, such as:
  - The Hero
  - The Mentor
  - The Temptress
- Analysis and close reading skills

**Objectives:** Students will be able to identify the hero's journey and character archetypes.

**Suggested Time Frame:** This lesson can be tweaked to take as little as one class period to a week.

**Synopsis:** Before reading, introduce students to archetypes, particularly the hero's journey and the characters of hero, mentor, and temptress. Allow students to practice identifying these archetypes in stories, films, or shows with which they are familiar.

During reading, students can note places where they believe the archetype can be applied. Provide a copy of the Hero's Journey handout on the next page for students to fill in as they read or during class discussions.

After reading, students will complete an assessment demonstrating their understanding of the Hero's Journey and its archetypes in *The Monkey King*.

### Grading/Assessment:

Students will create a final product that demonstrates how Sun Wukong's journey to the West is an archetypal hero's journey. (Note: Some students may wish to focus on Tripitaka's journey rather than Sun Wukong.) This can be in the form of a chart, artwork, a presentation, or a writing assignment.

## Differentiation:

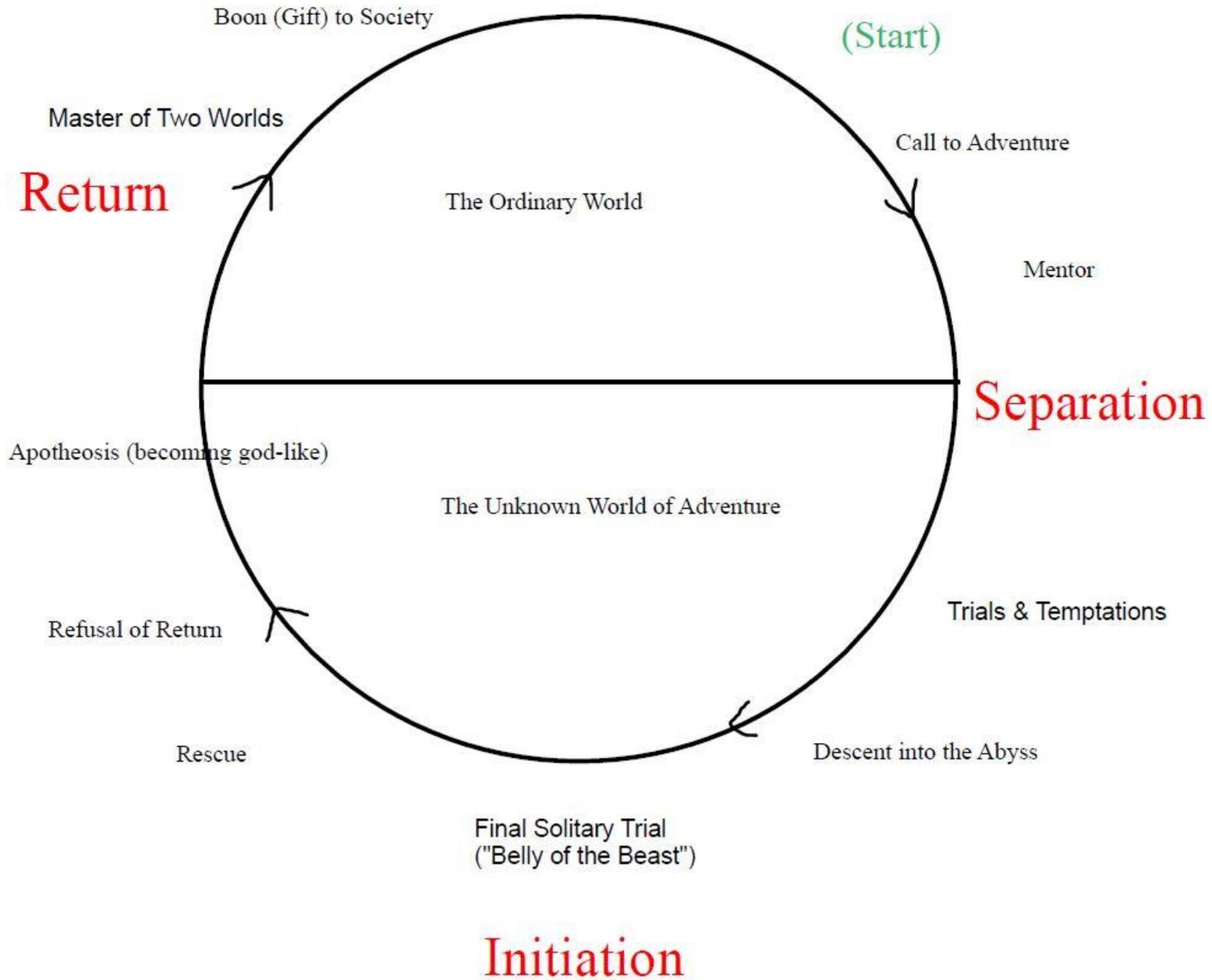
To assist EL and developing readers, teachers can offer the following modifications:

- Provide students a visual to use for tracking the elements of the Hero's Journey. These visuals are often designed like a clock, which pairs nicely with the TED-Ed video listed below. A quick online search of "hero's journey clock" should yield several results.
- Simplify the number of elements for students to track while reading. For example, students could identify the call to action, trials, crisis, and return.
- Print the steps you wish students to look for on sticky notes. As students read, they put the sticky on the page where they believe the element is introduced.
- Allow students to work in small groups on a poster-sized version.
- Reduce the reading being examined. It is possible to fill out elements of the journey from one chapter of *The Monkey King*.

## Teacher Resources:

- Hero's Journey videos on *YouTube*
  - [TED-Ed's "What makes a hero?—Matthew Winkler"](#)
  - [Crash Course's "The Hero's Journey and the Monomyth: Crash Course World Literature #25"](#)
- Modern versions of the Hero's Journey:
  - *Bluey*, "Curry Quest", Season 3, Episode 8, available on Disney+
  - [Taylor Swift's "Cardigan" music video](#)
  - A LOT of movies or shows, including *Barbie*, *The Lego Movie*, *Stranger Things*, most Disney or Marvel films, or classics like *The Wizard of Oz*
    - NOTE: Asking students to identify the journey elements for something with which they are already familiar is a solid introductory assignment. Students are surprised they've been consuming Hero's Journey storylines, and the discussions they have while identifying the elements are thoughtful and, often, amusing. Ex. from the past, which students debated rather heatedly: Is Nemo or Marlin the hero in *Finding Nemo*, or is it both?

# The Archetype of the Hero's Journey



# *How We Got Monkey King: Journey to the West*

## Teacher Guide

**Standard(s) addressed: 9-10.RC.1, 9-10.W.3, 9-10.CC.1**

### **Concepts and skills:**

- Oral Tradition
- Editor
- Textual History
- Embellishment
- Folk hero

**Objectives:** Students will be able to explain the centuries-long process of oral storytelling and editing that had to occur for Wu Cheng'en to create the first written *Journey to the West*.

**Suggested timeframe:** 2 class periods

**Synopsis:** This activity is a simulation of the centuries-long textual history of *Journey to the West*, where each step of the activity represents a phase of the text's creation as described in Julia Lovell's introduction.

[This Google Slides Presentation can be copied and edited to your preferences in order to display the following steps for students.](#)

### **Slide One: Choose a Hero, Setting, and a Quest**

Tell the class that they are going to create a collection of stories centering around a folk hero. You can pre-select a character or have the class select a main character to be the folk hero. Offer some choices (ideas: celebrities, stuffed animals, toy figurines, or people/animals/etc. from stock photos). They will also need a setting for the story and a quest for the folk hero. Don't spend too long on this step.

### **Slide Two: Begin to Tell Evolving Oral Stories**

Assign students to groups of 4, each person numbered 1-4. Person #1 comes up with a basic idea for an obstacle for the character to overcome as part of the quest. Persons #2 and 3 retell the story, each adding at least one new, preferably outlandish or absurd detail to the story, and Person #4 should make an audio recording of the group's version of the story, embellishing and adding details as desired. Stories do not have to be long. Keeping them to one minute is a good guide, and it is ok if the roles get blurred. The important part is that the groups are orally creating and changing the story. Groups should upload their recordings to a shared space (i.e. Google Drive folder). Label this recording file with the group names and the letter A.

**Slide Three: Choose an Exciting Sidekick**

Come back together as a whole class and select an exciting new sidekick (perhaps one of the potential characters who wasn't initially chosen to be the main character, or another suggestion from the class).

**Slide Four: Tell More Oral Stories and Embellish Even More with the Exciting New Sidekick**

Return back to the same small groups, and members can rotate roles if desired. Person #1 tells a basic idea for another obstacle for the character to overcome, incorporating the new sidekick who is much more interesting than the main character. Person #2 and #3 retell the story, each adding at least one new, preferably outlandish or absurd detail, and person #4 should make an audio recording of the group's version of the story, embellishing and adding details as desired. Again, stories do not have to be long. Groups should upload their recordings to the shared space. Label this recording file with the group names and the letter B.

**Slide Five: Write the Stories Down (And Keep Embellishing)**

Assign each group to listen to the two stories of one other group. Their task is to then create a written version of each oral story. They should add the sidekick to story A, bring out the sidekick more prominently in story B, and make the story even more outlandish. These stories do not need to be lengthy—a 200-word limit could keep them manageable if you think they might get out-of-control. These stories should be uploaded/saved to a shared space.

**Slide Six: Select and edit stories from multiple sources into one cohesive collection**

As a final step, groups share the written stories with the whole class. The class could collectively act as an editor and vote on a decided-upon number of stories to include in a final version and paste them into a single compilation. Or, if you have time, each group could curate their own compilation of selected stories, deciding upon the order and providing transitions and final editing.

After the simulation, it is important for students to understand what each step represents in the textual history of *Journey to the West*, so students should now read p. xvi (beginning at the bottom paragraph "Most of the 'official' version...") to p. xix (until the end of the first paragraph that concludes with "... into a single novel").

**Grading/Assessment:** Matching activity (on next page). Students match the steps of the simulation lesson with quotations from Lovell's introduction. Students will likely need an explanation for what a Rolodex is! 😊  
(Answers: 1. E, 2. C, 3. A, 4. F, 5. D, 6. B).

**Differentiation:**

Some students may need suggestions for settings and quests for the hero. For the groups, they could be smaller and slides 2 and 4 could be condensed down to fewer steps or done collectively. The quiz could be done collaboratively if desired.

**Teaching resources:**

Students will need their copies of Julia Lovell's *Monkey King: Journey to the West*, recording devices such as phones, and Google Drive or other shared collaborative file space

# How We Got *Journey to the West*

## Student Assessment

### Class Simulation Steps

### Textual History of *Journey to the West* Represented (see Introduction)

- |       |   |   |
|-------|---|---|
| _____ | 1. Choose a hero and a quest.   | a. The stories of Tripitaka over centuries of retellings eventually included “a Monkey disciple, a delinquent-turned-Buddhist bodyguard” (xvii).  |
| _____ | 2. Begin to tell evolving oral stories.   | b. “[S]ometime in the sixteenth century, a talented writer with a passion for literary impishness and descriptive poetry knitted existing characters and stories together with episodes of his own creation into a single novel” (xix).     |
| _____ | 3. Choose an exciting sidekick.   | c. Stories of Tripitaka’s life were “adapted and readapted by oral storytellers in increasingly outlandish ways” and “the odyssey over the centuries blurred into mythology” (xvii).  |
| _____ | 4. Create more oral stories and embellish even more with the exciting new sidekick. | d. “the stories told about Tripitaka and his charismatic Monkey disciple came to resemble a fictional <a href="#">Rolodex</a> , from which writers and entertainers across East Asia could take and retell their favorite episodes” (xvii). |
| _____ | 5. Write the stories down (and keep embellishing).                                  | e. Buddhist monk Tripitaka was “an indisputably remarkable historical individual” (xvi) who lived from 602-664 AD and traveled to India to bring back sacred Buddhist scriptures to China.  |
| _____ | 6. Select and edit stories from multiple sources into one cohesive collection.      | f. “[A]cross the next three hundred years, this character [the Monkey disciple] would come to dominate the narrative” (xvii).   |

# The Art of Translation

## Teacher Guide

**Standard(s) addressed:** 9-10.RC.10, 9-10.RC.12, 9-10.CC.1, 9-10.CC.2

**Concepts and skills:**

- translation
- adaptation
- abridgment
- diction
- denotation
- connotation

**Objectives:** Students will be able to compare and contrast different translations of *Journey to the West* in various domains such as diction, structure, style, and length and distinguish between a direct translation, an adaptation, and an abridgement. Students will also be able to explain the challenges of translating a text from one language to another.

**Suggested timeframe:** Two 45-minute class periods

**Synopsis:** This lesson will utilize two thinking routines from [Harvard University's Project Zero](#). You will utilize a ["jigsaw" approach](#) for grouping where students are first in one group and then share their findings with a new group. Playing cards work great for grouping students for a jigsaw. Modify a deck of cards so that you can give one card per student—for example, use only the numbers 1-6 in the deck for a class of 24 students.

On day 1, deal the cards out to students and have the hearts, diamonds, spades, and clubs each meet as separate groups. (If you wanted smaller groups, you could split the suits into odds and evens according to the number of the card). Give each group copies of [the four excerpts in this Google Folder](#), plus they should use their copies of *Monkey King: Journey to the West* chapter 1, pages 1-2 as an additional excerpt for a total of five. The "See, Think, Wonder" routine below takes an inductive approach, with student groups given the space and freedom to notice and discuss similarities and differences among the excerpts, using the guiding questions provided.

A THINKING ROUTINE FROM PROJECT ZERO, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

## See, Think, Wonder

What do you see?

What do you think about that?

What does it make you wonder?

**Purpose:** *What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?*

This routine encourages students to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. It helps stimulate curiosity and sets the stage for inquiry.

On day 2, students should then meet according to the number from their playing cards to share their findings so that these new groups will have representation from each of the previous suit groups. Students will hopefully have noticed different qualities of the excerpts and can add to their observation notes. The teacher should circulate and assess whether the students are noticing differences in length, structure, style, and word choice. By utilizing the jigsaw approach, groups will ideally be able to share with their new groups what may have gone unnoticed in their first groups, and they may even notice more.

The teacher can then bring the class back together to discuss the concepts of direct translation, adaptation, and abridgement, and which excerpts might be categorized as which.

If there is time, the following TEDx video “Why Translating Literature Is Sometimes Impossible” discusses the challenges of translating a literary work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCvOw3gKJOU>

### **Grading/Assessment:**

As a final assessment, students could write a reflection explaining whether they think each translation is an adaptation, abridgment, or direct translation. Additionally, they could utilize the “I Used to Think... Now I think” routine as it relates to the challenges of translating a text from one language to another, particularly a text as lengthy as *Journey to the West*.

A THINKING ROUTINE FROM PROJECT ZERO, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

## I Used to Think... Now I think...

Think about what you have learned about the topic we have been studying and complete the following sentence stems:

I used to think...

Now I think...

*Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?*

This routine helps students to reflect on their thinking about a topic or issue and explore how and why their thinking has changed. It helps consolidate new learning.

**Differentiation:** For extra challenge, students could compare/contrast additional translations. If you happen to have any students who can read [the original Chinese](#), they might even be able to offer extra insights. If you think the students might need additional scaffolding or guidance about what to pay attention to, on day 1, you could put each group in charge of noticing one specific dimension of the translations (one group compares length, another group compares diction, another group compares style, etc.) Additionally, students who might struggle with all five translations could reduce the number of translations to compare.

### **Teaching resources:**

[Jigsaw grouping strategy](#)

[Google folder with all excerpts](#)

[Project Gutenberg Journey to the West](#) (Chinese)

[Harvard University's Project Zero](#)

[TEDx video “Why Translating Literature Is Sometimes Impossible”](#)

# *The Monkey King: A “Picaresque” Novel*

## Teacher Guide

**Standard(s) addressed:** 9-10.RC.1, 9-10.RC.3, 9-10.CC.1

**Concepts and skills:**

- picaresque novel
- episodic structure
- characterization
- satire

**Objectives:** Students will be able to identify features of a text that characterize the genre of a picaresque novel through looking at two examples. Then, they will be able to infer these features after reading the first two chapters of *Monkey King: Journey to the West*.

**Suggested timeframe:** This lesson correlates with students’ reading of the first two chapters of *Monkey King*. Depending on the level of students, this activity ideally would take 1-2 class periods. The first class period can focus on Part I of the student task sheet and the first two rows of the chart (*Forrest Gump* and *Don Quixote*) on Part II. The students would then read the first two chapters of *The Monkey King* and complete the third row of the chart for discussion on the second day.

**Synopsis:** This activity introduces students to the genre of a picaresque novel. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Baldick) explains that “picaresque” comes from the Spanish word *pícaro*, which means “rogue” or “scoundrel,” referring to the central character of such a novel, but “picaresque” can also be used in a more general sense as a long narrative, “loosely structured as a sequence of episodes united only by the presence of the central character, who is often involved in a long journey” (193). This activity involves students sampling and comparing the first chapter of *Don Quixote*, the film *Forrest Gump* (1994), and the first two chapters of *Monkey King: Journey to the West*.

**Grading/Assessment:** The attached student task handout could be used for formative assessment; for summative assessment, students could identify another picaresque story independently and explain its characteristics in comparison to *The Monkey King* in a formal essay. Students could also write or act out in groups their own picaresque narrative with a *pícaro* character, including a few episodic events that incorporate satire.

**Differentiation:**

You could choose to show only the video overview of *Don Quixote* for readers who might struggle with archaic language in the text. Students could also look at the table of contents of *Don Quixote* to get an idea of the episodic nature of the narrative. For students who might need more of a challenge, they could read additional passages of *Don Quixote* or additional samples of picaresque novels, such as *Candide*, *Don Juan*, or even *Gulliver's Travels*.

**Teaching resources:**

[The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms](#)

*Forrest Gump* trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLvqoHBptjg>

Full text of *Don Quixote* :

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/996/pg996-images.html>

Video Synopsis of *Don Quixote*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDUPu6tMWHY&t=223s>

Simple, accessible cartoon version of *Journey to the West*

Episode 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73XAgADpBqY>

Episode 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9EGRTsaNYI>

# Introduction to The Picaresque Novel

## Student Task Sheet

**Part I:** Read the descriptions of three different characteristics of a picaresque novel below and answer/discuss the corresponding questions.

### **Characterization: *Picaro***

The main character in this genre of story is a *picaro*, which comes from the Spanish word for a “rogue,” a “scoundrel,” or a crafty character who breaks the rules. More broadly, the main character of a picaresque story can also generally refer to a flawed, yet perhaps likable, central character. Sometimes this type of character is also called an antihero.

*Who are some characters have you encountered before in literature or pop culture who fit this description of a picaro?*

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### **Plot: Episodic Structure**

A picaresque novel (or film) does not have much of a central plot; rather, it consists of loosely connected stories that involve the main character. To illustrate, think about the difference between a TV show that consists of neatly wrapped-up episodes that you can watch one at a time, maybe even out of order, compared with a show where you need to watch all of the episodes in order to know how the plot resolves.

*What are some stories you have encountered before in literature or pop culture that are episodic in structure?*

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**Satire: Poking Fun**

The story may make fun of or exaggerate certain aspects of society, politics, culture, or humans in general.

*What are some examples of stories you have encountered before in literature or pop culture that are satirical?*

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**Part II:** For the next part of this activity, you will examine three different stories (text or film) to understand the concept of a “picaresque” novel, which encompasses all of these features in some way. In the chart below, explain how the text or film connects to the characteristics of a picaresque novel as explained on the previous page.

<b>Text or Film Example</b>	<b>Characterization</b>	<b>Plot</b>	<b>Satire</b>
<a href="#"><i>Forrest Gump</i> (film trailer)</a>			
<a href="#"><i>Don Quixote</i> Chapter 1</a> and <a href="#">video overview</a>			
<i>Monkey King</i> Chapters 1-2 and <a href="#">video overview</a> (watch parts 1 and 2)			

# Folklore and the Trickster

## Teacher Guide

### Standard(s) addressed:

9-10.CC.2: Examine, analyze, and reflect on ideas under discussion by providing textual evidence to support or refute those ideas.

9-10.CC.3: Expand conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

9-10.W.3: Write narrative compositions.

### Concepts and skills:

- Folklore
- Folktales
- The Trickster

**Objectives:** Students will examine folklore from around the world to determine genre conventions.

**Suggested Time Frame:** The activity and discussions can take 1-3 days depending on the number of stories students are asked to read. Allow another 2-3 days for the assessments, with the possibility of more time if students are expected to type up a fully developed folktale.

**Synopsis:** Select several folktales to share with students. You may choose to center your tales within China or East Asia or broaden your selections to the world. You may choose to provide students with digital texts, including audio or video versions, and/or bring in children's picture books. On the day of your lesson, write the question: *What is folklore? What purpose does it serve?* Students can work independently, in pairs, or in small groups to read through the stories and compile a list of their observations about story structure and style. With this lesson, the more variety the class is exposed to, the better the discussion. Students need not read the same stories.

Once stories are read, ask students to sort their observations into a list of requirements ("Musts") versus options ("Mights") for the genre of a folktale. Using a T-chart, compile these lists into a space visible to the whole class, either digitally or physically. The "Must" list becomes the working definition for a folktale.

Repeat this exercise with trickster tales. Create the chart for the trickster specifically.

**Grading/Assessment:**

Students can create their own trickster folktales. This could be graded as a writing assignment, using the “Must” lists as requirements for what must be included in their tales.

Students could evaluate *The Monkey King* (either a chapter or in its entirety) based on their “Must” list. The product for this could either be a chart, a written paragraph, or an essay.

**Differentiation:**

Using children’s picture books benefits all developing learners as they are introduced to the concepts. The accessibility of the texts aids student comprehension and confidence.

To smooth the discussion process, students could work in small groups to come up with two “Musts” and two “Mights”, then pick a spokesperson for the group to share with the class.

For assessment, the assignments already offer some modifications. Using smaller portions of the text or chunking the assignment will help. For students who struggle with interacting with the text, using sticky notes with the “Must” list items printed (one per sticky note) would allow students to identify these elements on the page. For some students, this might be the assessment itself.

**Teacher Resources:**

The “Must/Might” chart is adapted from [\*Writing with Mentors: How to Reach Every Writer in the Room Using Current Engaging Texts\*](#) and [\*A Teacher’s Guide to Mentor Texts\*](#) by Allison Marchetti and Rebekah O’Dell.

# Researching Context for *The Monkey King*

## Teacher Guide

### Standard(s) addressed:

- 9-10.W.5: Conduct more sustained research assignments and tasks to build knowledge about the research process and the topic under study.
- 9-10.CC.7: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence logically so that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, ensuring organization and development are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

### Concepts and skills:

- Research skills
- Presenting with a visual aid

**Objectives:** Students will build cultural knowledge to connect with *The Monkey King*. This lesson can be done as a pre-reading activity as well, but the popular culture research topic might be easier for students post-reading.

**Suggested Time Frame:** Allow two full class periods for groups to conduct research and collaborate on their presentation. A suggestion is to allow a few days between the class provided work time and the presentations so that students can continue to work independently to finish if needed. The amount of time needed for presentations depends on the structure and number of students. Some options are: presentations to the whole class, a jigsaw presentation variety, or presentation videos posted to a shared platform.

**Synopsis:** Students will choose a topic and conduct a mini-research project over a topic related to Chinese history to help them better understand the references and deeper meanings in *The Monkey King*. They will present their findings.

Possible topics:

- Dynasties (Ming and Tang, specifically)
- Religion (Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism)
- The real Tripitaka
- Symbolism, such the number 72, importance of peaches, and monkeys
- *Journey to the West* & the 4 Chinese Classics
- Connections to Pop Culture\*
  - Video games such as *Mario Bros.*, *League of Legends*, and *Fortnite*
  - TV & Movies such as *Dragon Ball*, *American Born Chinese*, and *Kung Fu Panda*

- o Comics & Graphic Novels such as *Superman*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, and *American Born Chinese*

\*There are enough references to Sun Wukong in popular culture that this could be an extension post-reading.

**Grading/Assessment:** Student presentations will be assessed. Teachers may choose to focus the assessment on the content, the quality of presentation, or speech expectations.

**Differentiation:**

For students who need accommodations for public speaking, allowing them to record their presentations shared to a class platform is a good alternative.

Another lower-stakes option is to design this as a [jigsaw](#) assignment. For jigsaw, students would work in small groups to research their topic and create a presentation. Students would then be re-assigned groups with one representative per topic so that each group can hear about all topics. This option allows for students to feel more confident because they have created the content with others and more comfortable when speaking to a smaller group of students.

**Teacher Resources:**

[Jigsaw grouping strategy](#)

# “The Great Sage Equal to Heaven Was Here”: Vernacular Graffiti

## Teacher Guide

**Standard(s) addressed:** 11-12.RC.12-13

### Concepts and skills:

- Vernacular language
- Slang
- Graffiti

**Objectives:** Students will think critically about literary and cultural status and find examples of vernacular language in Lovell’s translation of *Monkey King: Journey to the West*.

**Suggested timeframe:** One 45-minute class period, along with ongoing attention throughout the course of the whole book.

### Synopsis:

This lesson connects to pages xix-xx in the introduction to the novel, where Lovell explains that the language of *Monkey King: Journey to the West* in the original Chinese was vernacular, or common everyday language, reflecting the wider reach of popular literature to more common people. In fact, she writes that this genre of writing had a much lower status than the poetic styles of the canonical writers who were traditionally celebrated.

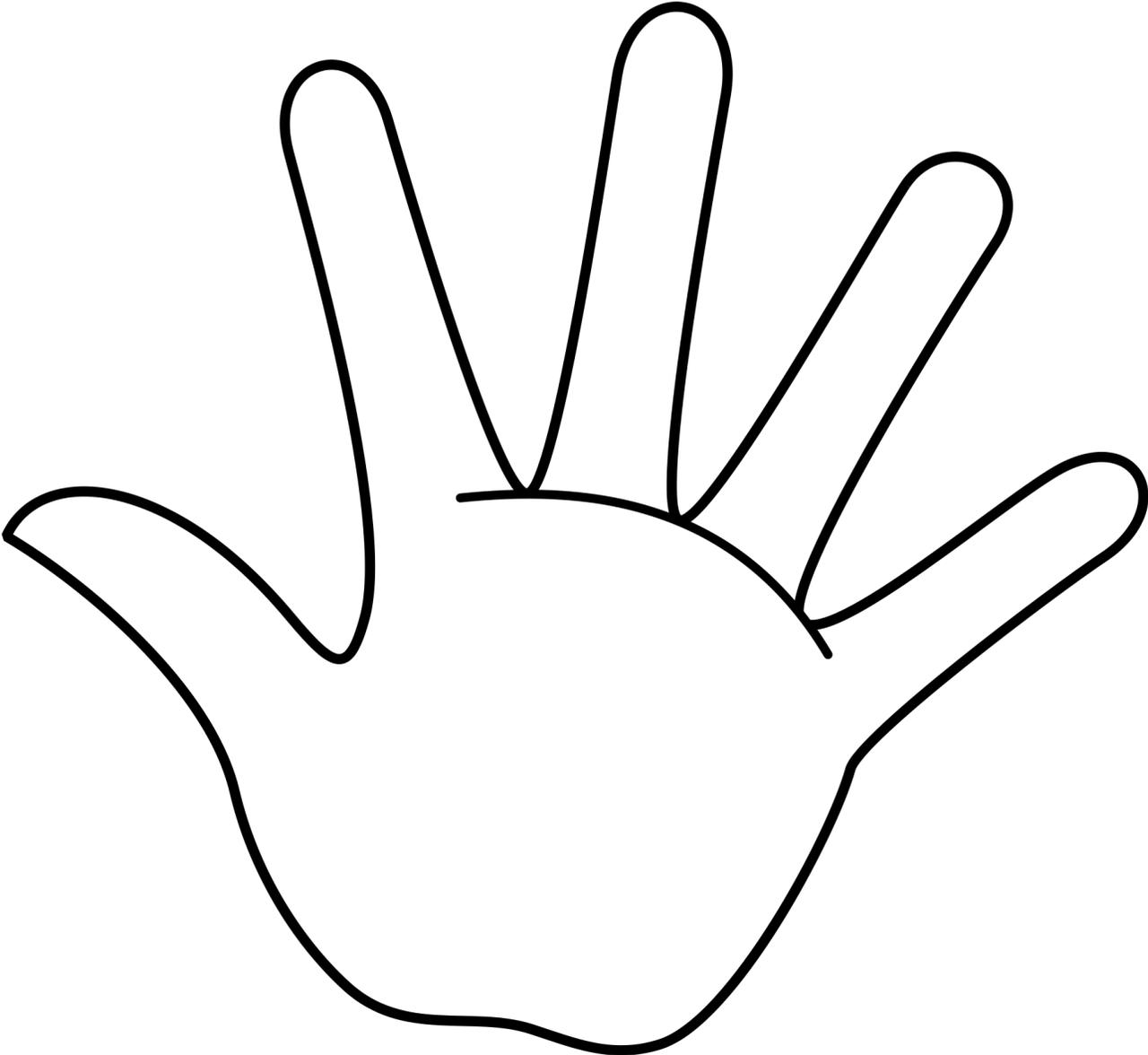
To begin, first engaging students in anticipatory journal writing (or see tactile differentiation idea below) and discussion of literary status in today’s world. Provide a list of authors and genres and have students rank them in terms of their literary or cultural status: Shakespeare, drama, rap, pop songs, slam poetry, social media posts, newspaper articles, anime, manga, graphic novels, romance novels, horror stories, documentaries, action movies, the list goes on. You could include different publications to rank such as supermarket tabloids, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, comic books, trade magazines, etc. in terms of the public perception. Students could also come up with other forms of writing and culture and place them where they fit in the literary/cultural hierarchy. Questions to explore with students could be: Why are some literary forms and styles considered “lowbrow”? Why do we study some literary forms in school and not others? Do you think there are literary forms represented here that society should hold in higher regard?

This activity would then lead to a discussion of Lovell's introduction and how *Journey to the West* was likely considered a popular entertainment genre and not high literary art like the writings of Confucius.

**Grading/Assessment:** The assessment of this lesson is easily introduced after discussion of literary status above. This is a simple assignment, yet will require students to pay close attention to the language used in the book. The character of Sun Wukong has colorful jabs and insults that he tosses around, and the translator Julia Lovell has used diction that characterizes him as a modern monkey with a flair for 21st century idioms, i.e. "Stuff happens! ... What of it?" (57) and "Not really my thing" (25). Paying attention to these Monkey-isms is the goal of this assignment. In Chapter 7 the Buddha tricks Monkey into thinking that he has leapt out of the Buddha's hand and marked five pillars with graffiti, only to learn that the "pillars" were the Buddha's fingers, so for this activity, you'll use the idea of a hand and graffiti for students to notice and visualize vernacular language.

Enlarge the hand on the next page or draw a giant hand on a large sheet of bulletin board paper. You could have a sheet for the whole class or give small groups their own sheet of bulletin paper. As students read the book, have them "vandalize" the hand with phrases and insults that they think represent the vernacular language of the translation. You could devote a few minutes per day for students to vandalize the hand. You could enhance this activity also by hosting a Monkey Insult Slam, or pick 64 Monkey-isms and have an NCAA March Madness bracket competition, voting to determine the harshest burn or wittiest saying.

**Differentiation:** Some students, especially those who are tactile may enjoy doing the opening of this lesson as a tactile activity, placing various literary artifacts in order of their cultural status: books, DVDs, magazines, album art, graphic novels, comic books, popular fiction, the classics.



## Assessment Ideas

- Create a playlist of songs to go with different characters and plot events in the novel.
- Create an action figure or set of action figures with an accompanying brochure describing its features.
- Propose a video game or board game concept with instructions to reflect how *Monkey King: Journey to the West* connects to the hero archetype.
- Create a LEGO depiction of a scene from the book with a brochure of directions & explanations of the different elements of the scene.
- Write a supermarket tabloid-style article with headline and accompanying illustration about an event from the book.
- Write a TV script for a sitcom episode inspired by the events in the book.
- Create a movie trailer for an adaptation of the book.
- Watch an adaptation of *Monkey King: Journey to the West* (such as *American Born Chinese* on Disney+ or *Princess Iron Fan*) and write a review or analysis.
- Present a digital museum exhibit of contemporary pop culture references to *The Monkey King*.
- Have a poetry slam, similar to the one referenced in Chapter 10, page 92

## Additional Resources

<https://journeytothewestlibrary.weebly.com/>

<https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/ea/archives/journey-to-the-west/>

[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/tps/600ce\\_cn.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/tps/600ce_cn.htm)