Introduction:
A prime component for the propagation of culture is found in mythology. Myths are cultural stories that a people tell about themselves in order to explain the world about them. While myths can share some similarities in characteristics from culture to culture they are inherently unique as are the people who tell them. An excellent way to introduce students to cultural diversity is through the study of mythology. By studying mythology students are able to come to an understanding of the rich cultural diversity that makes up our society as well as gain a greater appreciation of the common human elements that bind us together.

This unit lesson plan is specifically designed for use in a seventh grade language arts class. With few modifications it could be considered appropriate for any secondary language arts curriculum. The primary focus of this plan will be the study of mythology through reading and the exploration and analysis of cultural concepts through written work and classroom discussion. Students will read myths from Mexico, Ireland, Africa, and Europe as well as Native American and Western American mythology. An important component of this lesson plan is the use of culturally appropriate music to accompany each day’s lesson. The time span of this lesson encompasses approximately ten, 65-minute class periods.

This paper will provide detailed examples of the first two days of lesson plans as well as a general outline of the remainder of the unit. The final product of this unit is a student presentation of a myth that is culturally relevant to them.

Behavioral Objectives:
All objectives will be in compliance with Crane School District #13 and the State of Arizona language arts curriculum standards. Students will read selected myths in order to summarize for details, make predictions, and determine cause and affect relationships. Students will compare and contrast selected myths for elements that are similar in nature and differences between stories. Students will analyze how the differences in explaining similar subjects depict the worldview of the cultures that created these myths. Students will write an expository essay, using the Crane Six-Trait Writing Rubric, which tells how myths reflect the nature of a culture. Students will research and prepare an oral presentation accompanied by a written report into their own culture myths and their significance.

Sub-objectives: Lesson #1
1. Students will define the term “mythology” with 100% accuracy.
2. Students will be able to retell important aspects of a story with 80% accuracy.
3. Students will compare and contrast myths from different cultures with 80% accuracy.
4. Students will summarize the reading selections for important details and cause-effect relationships with 80% accuracy.
Modifications for Students with Disabilities:
More common modifications include the following: visual organizers and board work is prepared in a large print handout for students with vision problems. Myths used in this lesson are also available on audiocassette. Students are allowed to record answers versus written responses. All modifications should be made within the student’s 504 plan or IEP. For the computer lab activities it is important to take into account the seating arrangement for student who may have mobility issues.

Anticipatory Set:
Students enter the room to the strains of “Cry of the Celts,” performed by The Irish Traditional Band. The room is darkened except for two theatrical, red stage lights. As the music ends the instructor begins a dramatic reading of the “Celtic tale of Cuchulainn.” (See appendix A.) After the reading the room lights are turned on and the instructor leads the students in a discussion as to what they already know about myths and culture. The point of this discussion is for students to generate examples of myths that they are familiar with in order to create a concrete definition of mythology.

Dialogue:
Teacher – “The story I have just read for you was the myth about Cuchulainn, an ancient Celtic or Irish hero. Does anyone know what a myth is?”
Susan – “A myth is a story?”
Johnny – “No, a myth is a story that isn’t true.”
Teacher – “Actually both of you are correct. A myth is a traditional story that people tell about ancestors, heroes, or supernatural beings that are connected with the religion or beliefs of a culture. Myths shape the worldview of a people by explaining aspects of the natural world or defining the customs or ideals of a society.” The teacher writes this example on the board for students to copy.
Laura – “I don’t understand, what do you mean by worldview?”
Teacher – “A worldview is how a people or culture view and interpret the world about them. In other words, myths are stories that explain the beliefs of a people such as how the Earth was created, why does rain fall, the creation of fire, or how animals came to be. Myths can also explain simple things like how a hill or town got its name.”
Laura – “So a myth is a fictional story that a group of people tell to explain things?”
Teacher – “Essentially that is correct. Does anyone know of any cultural myths?” A forest of hands shoots up into the air. “Okay, Paul.”
Paul – “I know about the myth of Pecos Bill!”
Teacher – “Good, Pecos Bill is a modern myth. What are some of the things that you know about Pecos Bill?”
Paul – “Didn’t he create that mountain?”
Teacher – “Yes, I believe there is a story about how he created Pikes Peak, very good! Anyone else?”
Maria – “How about Paul Bunyan?”
Teacher – “Yes, he is definitely a mythological hero. He is credited with creating the Mississippi River. Anyone else?”
Amber – “How about the stories about Hercules and Zeus?”
Rogelio – “How about stories about Brujas?”
Teacher – “Yes, there are many myths that different cultures tell about witchcraft. Very good! So, myths can explain how things were created, such as rivers and mountains. Myths also tell about beliefs in deities such as the Greek myths about Zeus. Myths can explain beliefs about things such as witchcraft. And myths can tell about heroes such as Hercules. Does everyone have a pretty good understanding of what is a myth?” Students nod their heads. “Good, then let’s start by reading some examples of myths, please open your textbook to page 409.”

**Teacher Input / Modeling Behavior:**
The teacher should read aloud the Seneca Indian myth, “The Storytelling Stone”, from North America. During this guided reading the instructor should check for comprehension on targeted vocabulary words. When the reading is complete the teacher should write a table on the board. As students read stories this table should be updated. See the example below.

**Myth Culture Explains:**
Cuchulainn Celtic/Irish Hero of Ulster
The Storytelling Stone Seneca – Iroquois Indians Knowledge of world

**Dialogue:**
Teacher – “So, can anyone tell me the importance of the storytelling stone to the Seneca Indians?”
Billy – “The stone told stories.”
Laura – “The stone told stories about the world before the Seneca came.”
Teacher – “Very good! Both of you are correct. But think of this, does the story also create the position of storyteller in the tribe?”
Maria – “Yes, because the stone said that one person would remember the stories better than others and that they should be paid with food.”
Teacher – “In other words, the position of history teacher was created due to this myth. Although I do not think Mrs. Jones would want to be paid in fish.” (The class laughs.) “Now, we are going to take turns reading aloud the African story, “How the Lame Boy Brought Fire from Heaven” on page 416.”

**Check for Comprehension:**
After reading the story the teacher should check for understanding.

**Dialogue:**
Teacher – “Crystal, can you summarize for me what this story was about?”
Crystal – “It was about how people got fire.”
Teacher – “Very good! Now who can tell me how people got fire?”
Juan – “The boy stole fire from the god Obassi Osaw.”
Teacher – “Well said! Who can tell me what happened to the boy?”
Leticia – “Obassi Osaw made him lame so he couldn’t walk.”
Teacher – “Yes, you are absolutely correct! Now let’s read another story on page 418 titled, ‘How Raven Helped the Ancient People.’” After reading the story the teacher should update the chart on the board as follows:
Myth Culture Explains:
Cuchulainn Celtic/Irish Hero of Ulster
The Storytelling Stone Seneca – Iroquois Indians Knowledge of world
How the Lame Boy Brought Fire from Heaven. Africa Creation of fire
How Raven Helped the Ancient People North American/Native American
Creation of fire

Dialogue:
Teacher – “Now who can tell me how these stories are similar?”
Adriana – “They both tell how people got fire?”
Teacher – “That’s right, both explain an important event. Why would fire be important to an ancient people?”
Hector – “They need fire to cook their food.”
Juan – “They used fire to keep warm.”
Laura – “Fire allowed them to have light.”
Teacher – “Very good answers, all of you. Fire played an important role in the life of ancient people. Therefore, they created stories or myths to tell how they got fire.” Now on your own I want you to read the myth, Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky, on page 419. When you have finished please answer the questions page 420.”

Guided Practice:
Questions from page 420:
While the students are reading and answering questions it is important for the instructor to circulate around the room answering questions, checking for comprehension, and using Socratic questioning to build understanding.

1. Consider How the Lame Boy Brought Fire from Heaven and How the Raven Helped the Ancient People. What origin is explained differently in the two myths?
   A – How people got fire.

2. What punishment was received by (a) the boy in the first myth and (b) the snow-white bird in the second myth?
   A – In (a) the boy was made lame so he could not walk. In (b) the white Raven was made black from the soot of the fire.

3. What is the relationship between the sun and the moon in Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky?
   A – The sun and the moon are married. The sun is the husband and the moon is the wife.

4. What origin does the myth about the sun and the moon explain?
   A – This myth explains how the sun and the moon came to be placed in the sky.

After students have had time to read the story and answer the question the teacher should check for understanding by sampling student answers in class. Once the teacher is assured of student comprehension he/she should assign the homework assignment.

Closure:
After students have finished the guided practice the instructor should review the major elements of the lesson and check for understanding through Q&A.
1. Definition of mythology – A traditional story connected with the religion or belief of a culture, usually attempting to account for something in nature, to reinforce a cultural practice, or recount cultural heroes.

2. Examples of how mythology relates the important events in people’s lives.

3. Compare and contrast how mythology can relate the same event in different manners based upon cultural perspective.

Enrichment / Homework:
Students should read the three African stories on page 423, How the Animals Got Their Color, How Animals Got Their Tails, and Why there are Cracks in Tortoise’s Shell. When they have finished reading they should create a chart like the one the instructor created on the board.

Sub-objectives: Lesson #2
1. Students will review the definition of a myth.
2. Students will orally provide an explanation of why myths are important to a culture with 100% accuracy.
3. Students will compare and contrast myths from different cultures that explain the same event with 80% accuracy.
4. Students will write an expository essay, using the Crane Six-Trait Writing Rubric, which tells how myths reflect the nature of culture with 80% accuracy.

Anticipatory Set:
As students enter the room they hear the music of Mexican Corridos softly playing. On the board are review questions from the previous day’s lesson.

1. In your own words, define a myth.
2. Why are myths important to a culture?
3. Why do myths that tell of the same event differ?

After students have had time to answer the board questions the instructor should utilize random sampling to check for understanding of student comprehension. It is important the instructor generate several different student responses to each question in order to attain effective peer modeling.

Teacher Input:
After that is complete the teacher has the students take out their previous night’s homework. Also on the board is the chart from the previous day. After reviewing the chart with the students the instructor should generate student answers from last night’s homework in order to complete the table. When finished the table should be complete as shown below:

Myth Culture Explains:
Cuchulainn Celtic/Irish Hero of Ulster
The Storytelling Stone Seneca – Iroquois Indians Knowledge of world
How the Lame Boy Brought Fire from Heaven. Africa Creation of fire
How Raven Helped the Ancient People North American/Native American
Creation of fire
How the Animals Got Their Color African Why it is important not to cheat someone
How the Animals Got Their Tails African Why it is important not to be lazy
Why There Are Cracks in Tortoise’s Shell African Deceit works against the deceiver

The teacher should lead students in a review discussion of the various myths, what elements they explain, and their cultural relevance.

Dialogue:

Teacher – “Class can anyone tell me why these myths are important to their culture?”
Bobby – “Because they explain how the world works?”
Teacher – “Yes, but compare the African and the Native American myth about the creation of fire. Why are they different?”
Susan – “Because the stories are from two different cultures.”
Teacher – “Excellent, but why are they different?”
Susan – “Because the two different cultures look at things differently?”
Laura – “Because the two cultures have different gods?”
Juan – “Is it because each culture is in a different environment?”
Teacher – “All of you are correct. Each culture is a product of their own environment, each has developed their own beliefs, and each has a different worldview. Now why are they similar?”
Eduardo – “Because fire is important to man?”
Teacher – “Yes, fire is of universal importance to mankind. Almost all cultures have a story to explain how they got fire. In many of the myths fire is stolen from the gods. Now today I am going to have you pick one of the myths remaining in the chapter from your textbook. You will read the story then write an expository essay that explains how the myth reflects the elements of the culture that created the story.”

Modeling the Behavior:
Before the students begin the assignment it is important to make sure they clearly understand the objectives of the assignment. A suggested strategy is to provide an example of a quality expository essay on one of the previous days stories on an overhead projector. Then the instructor can analyze the assignment with the class to ensure their understanding of what is expected of them. As the teacher reviews the sample essay be sure to point out the various elements of the six-trait rubric.

Dialogue:
Teacher – “Class, I want you to look at this sample expository essay on how a myth explains the elements of a culture. This particular essay is on the myth I told you yesterday about the Irish hero Cuchulainn. Take a moment to read this essay then tell me what you notice.” After a few minutes a couple of students raise their hands. The teacher waits until the entire class is finished. Laura – “It looks like the Irish fought a lot.”
Bobby – “They are always killing.”
Teacher – “Yes, both of you are correct. Ireland (refer to map) is separated from England and the European continent by only a small expanse of water. They have a long history of invasions and rebellions. Also, the Irish, like the Scots were divided into small nations or clans that constantly
fought against each other for territory and resources. What else can you tell about the Irish culture from this essay?”
Leticia – “That women were rulers?”
Teacher – “Yes, women like Queen Maeve were powerful rulers. What else?”
Crystal – “Only the men seem to be fighting the battles.”
Susan – “Their culture values strength and bravery.”
Juan – “The bad people use tricks to defeat the honest warriors?”
Teacher – “Very well put Juan! All of you are correct, see how many things you can learn about a culture from this one myth? Now look at how the paper is written, how is it organized?”
Maria – “It has an introduction, main body, and conclusion.”
Johnny – “The opening gets the reader’s attention.”
Susan – “The closing summarizes the main points.”
Teacher – “Yes, this essay is very well organized and sticks to its subject. Notice the words the writer used to make it more interesting and to create a sense of imagery.”
Laura – “Did you write this Mr. Smith?”
Teacher – “No, this is an A+ paper from one of my students last year. See how I graded them on the elements of the six-trait rubric: voice, word choice, conventions, fluency, organization, and ideas and content? I expect you to use your rubrics and classroom resources such as dictionaries and thesauri to check your work. Make sure to reread and edit your paper.”

Check for Comprehension:
Ask the class if anyone has any questions on what is expected from them for this assignment. Randomly sample a few students to ensure that they understand the directions. As the students pick and read a myth. The teacher should make him/herself available to any student who requires additional instruction. Once the students start writing their essays the instructor should check their work and offer suggestions.

Enrichment:
For students who complete the task early have them pick an additional myth to read and analyze for extra credit.

Assessment:
Collect and grade student essays based upon the six-trait rubric. Return and review essays with class. Publish essays on class bulletin board. After returning and reviewing essays administer to students a multiple choice / short answer test based upon a cultural myth. (See appendix B) As the unit progresses it is recommended to utilize numerous short quizzes in order to gauge student achievement and to determine whether re-teaching is necessary. The final summative assessment will consist of a student report and presentation of a myth that reflects their own culture.

Materials:
2. Handout of the Crane Six-Trait Writing Rubric.
3. Appropriate cultural musical selections. The music used for this lesson includes traditional Celtic music, Scottish bagpipes, Native American chants, Mexican Corridos, and Peter and the Wolf.
Outline:
Students will complete the following tasks in the course of the next eight days:
Day 3: Students will review and share their expository essays. Students will read and discuss
three more short myths from Eastern European, Mexican, and Asian cultures. Play Peter and the
Wolf for bell work music.
Day 4: Students will take a multiple choice /short answer assessment on mythology. Students
will start research on their own cultural myths.
Day 5: Students will be provided computer lab time to research their own personal cultural
myths. Students will receive instruction on how to do a web search.
Day 6: Students will receive instruction on how to conduct an interview in order to gather culture
myths.
Day 7: Students will write their report.
Day 8: Students will write their report and prepare their presentation. All presentations after
being given a final grade will be displayed in the classroom.

Appendix A:
This story is taken from the website: http://frespace.virgin.com/dominic.fitzgerald/curic.htm

Cuchulainn
Cuchulainn was an ancient Gaelic hero who was endowed with superhuman qualities. His name
means 'The Hound of Culainn', but he was first called Setanta. His parents were Dechtire and
Lugh Lamhfhada (Lugh of the Long Hand / Pronounce "Loo Lawvodda"). At the age of five he
left home to join the Red Branch Knights, the Ulster army of the king Conor Mac Nessa. With
him he took his hurley, his silver ball, his javelin and his spear. He would hit the silver ball with
the hurley, leap forward and hit it a second time before it touched the ground, toss the javelin
ahead and then the spear, run after them all, catch the ball and javelin with one hand and the
spear with the other. When he reached the palace at Emain Macha (Armagh), he beat 150 boys at
hurling and other games. Cuchulainn achieved his name at the age of seven when he killed the
watchdog of Ulster belonging to Culainn', the smith and in return undertook to protect the
kingdom of Ulster and its people himself.

Cuchulainn became the leader of the Red Branch Knights. In battle, he was transformed by a
“Battle Fury” which looked like this: From head to toe, his whole body trembled like a bulrush in
a river torrent. His body turned right around inside his skin so that his heels, calves and hams
appeared in front. One of his eyes drew right back in his head, the other stood out huge and red
on his cheek. His mouth was distorted, twisted up to his ears so you could see his throat and a
man's head would fit into it. His hair stood up on his head like hawthorn, and there was a drop of
blood on every single hair. The light of the Champion stood out of his forehead as long and thick
as a warrior's whetstone and from the top of his head raised a thick column of dark blood like the
mast of a huge ship. When this happened the only way he could be calmed down was by being
ducked three times in cold water. During his lifetime he made a number of enemies, and one of
these Queen Maeve of Connaught brought about his downfall. The Queen learnt of a great
Brown Bull in Cooley, County Louth. The chieftain of Louth refused to let Maeve have his bull,
so she resolved to get it by force. Secretly she promised her beautiful daughter in marriage to
every leader in her army and so secured the help of every warrior outside Ulster. The army marched to Kells, on the Ulster border and pitched camp. Maeve sought an interview with the Ulsterman and, amazed to find him a mere boy, offered him gold and great rewards if he would desist. Cuchulainn refused, but Maeve secured his agreement to fight one of her heroes each day at the ford that lay between, reckoning that this was better than losing one hundred every night to Cuchulainn's sling. Day after day Cuchulainn fought Maeve's warriors, overcoming Morrigu, the water goddess, during his fight with the hero Loich who he still managed to wound mortally. After more such combats and deceitful ploys by Maeve, Cuchulainn mounted his war chariot and hurled himself against the men of Erin. Maeve with her forces sorely depleted, resorted once again to single combat. She finally forced Cúchulainn's foster brother Ferdia to face the Ulsterman, by threatening him with the spells of her Druids. After a great fight in which Ferdia almost proved almost a match for him, Cuchulainn badly wounded, emerged as the tragic victor. While he recovered from his wounds, the men of Ulster began to collect themselves, and the two armies faced each other on the plains of Meath. While this great battle was raging Maeve managed to capture the Brown Bull of Cooley, which she sent back to Connaught under escort. Eventually, through the intervention of Cúchulainn the Ulster army defeated Maeve's followers and they fled back to Cruachan, from whence they had originally set out. Cuchulainn lived on after his incredible feats of prowess, but not for long. Maeve, having bided her time, once again brought an army together to seek revenge. She had no trouble in assembling a great number of warriors because there was scarcely one who had not a relative slain by the Ulster hero. But it was only by magic that Cuchulainn was eventually pierced by his own spear. With great difficulty, holding in his entrails, Cuchulainn tied himself to a high stone by a lake, because as a Gaelic hero 'he did not wish to die either sitting or lying: it was standing that he wished to meet his death'. His faithful horse protected him as he died, and it was only when a raven alighted on his shoulder that his enemies knew he was dead.

Appendix B:

Mythology Test #1A:
Directions: Please read the two versions of this common Mexican myth. Study how they are different and how they are alike. When you are finished please answer the following questions. La Llorona (version A)

María lived with her parents in a small, conservative community. She was innocent, sincere and, above all, her father's pride and joy. When she was only fifteen, something unusual happened. María gave birth to a baby boy. No one had even suspected she was pregnant. Her parents - especially her father - felt disgraced and betrayed. A shotgun wedding was the only solution. But when asked who the father was, María claimed she had never been with a man. Finding this hard to believe, María's parents struggled to keep the baby a secret.

One night when María was sleeping, her father quietly entered her room and took the child. He carried the helpless bundle to a nearby river and threw him into the water. María woke up screaming, sensing that something terrible had happened. She ran out and saw her father heading back to the house. By the time she reached the river, it was too late--not only for the baby, but also for her. Blood was pouring out of her body.
María left only a trail of blood beside the river. Shortly after her disappearance, people in the community started seeing apparitions of a young girl holding a baby, weeping beside the river. These sightings continue to this day.

La Llorona (version B)

Sofía lived in a town where if you weren't married by the age of fifteen you were considered an old maid. Sofía was nineteen, single and extremely beautiful. But she was also considered selfish and egotistical, with some people even claiming she was a witch.

Sofía's reclusive life changed after meeting Luis. His physique and charm dazzled all the women—including Sofía. They soon became lovers, and within a year she gave birth to his son. Only a few days after the child's birth, Luis disappeared. Despite Sofía's agony, everyone blamed her.

One afternoon she overheard two men joke about having seen Luis in a nearby town with another woman. Sofía's sadness turned into uncontrollable rage. She ran to the lake and submerged her baby in water until there was only silence. When she realized what she had done, she let out a horrifying cry. Sofía stayed at the lake crying for days until she finally passed away. Since then, several children playing near the lake have mysteriously disappeared without a trace.

Multiple Choice:
1. In each myth, who is the protagonist?
   A. Baby
   B. The father
   C. A young woman
   D. A young man
2. In each myth what happens to the young woman’s baby?
   A. The baby is drowned
   B. The baby is sent to be raised by the grandmother
   C. The baby is orphaned
   D. The baby is taken by the father
3. In each myth the woman was approximately how old?
   A. Over thirty
   B. Under fifteen
   C. Under twenty
   D. Over twenty

True or False:
4. La Llorona is married. T / F
5. La Llorona drowns her baby in each story. T / F
6. In each story it is a man that brings La Llorona to grief. T / F
7. In each story La Llorona becomes a restless spirit (ghost). T / F
8. In version A of the story, her brother kills La Llorona’s baby. T / F
9. In version B of the story, La Llorona becomes an evil spirit. T / F
10. In version A, La Llorona is a mournful spirit, but is not evil. T / F
Short Answer:
11. What are two aspects of the culture that are reflected in this myth?
12. How does version A of the myth reflect the beliefs of a culture?
13. What is the significance of the name of the story, La Llorona?

* Note – Additional versions of the La Llorona myth may be found on the Website http://www.lallorona.com