

Finding a Narrative

Heroic Qualities	Heroic Image	Organizing Content into Story Form
<p>What “heroic” qualities or values are central to the topic? What makes the characters in this story full of wonder?</p> <p>Cedar is central to the cultures of numerous West Coast Indigenous nations, including the Tsimshian, Haida, Nisga’a Gitksan and Haisla. Traditionally, cedar provided these peoples with materials for clothing, shelter, transportation and utensils needed for everyday living. The cedar, then, is wonderful because it is essential for life. It represents munificence because it provides goods in extraordinary variety and abundance</p>	<p>What image captures the heroic qualities of the topic?</p> <p>The cedar as a monarch with a full treasure-house, bestowing gifts on the deserving and the poor</p>	<p>What “heroic narrative” will allow us to integrate the content we wish to cover?</p> <p>For students to “perfork” (perceive, feel, and think) the munificence of the cedar, they need first to imagine themselves as needy. Thus the opening of this unit involves an examination of students’ possessions. Where did their clothes come from? Their food? Their homes? The other things they value (e.g. cars, electronics, sporting goods, music)? Everything is “borrowed” from somewhere, maybe many different places and people. Suppose that the people, places, plants and animals wanted “their” materials and labour returned to them: where would students turn to for a new source to meet their needs and wants?</p> <p>Enter King (or Lord, or Chief) Cedar, monarch of the temperate rainforest, a vast realm he shares with lesser lords or chiefs. His message: he will share his wealth with those who understand and respect the laws of his land. Students have a limited period (e.g. two weeks) to show themselves worthy. To do so, they must perform a number of tasks involving research, writing, etc, culminating in a Cedar Feast.</p>

Developing Cognitive Tools

Cedar, the Munificent Monarch

Exploring Human Strengths & Emotions	Extremes of Reality	Collecting & Organizing	Teacher-led/structured ↕ Student-led/open-ended
<p><i>How can students understand the human hopes, fears, passions or struggles that have shaped our knowledge of this topic?</i></p> <p>There are at least two parallel themes that run through the unit:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respect – by requiring students to show themselves to be worthy of the cedar’s generosity; by asking them to investigate the craftsmanship necessary for working with cedar; by having them invite and take care of respected community members at the Cedar Feast. 2. Munificence – by having students see themselves as needy and dependent of the generosity of living things, people and places; by having them develop and share their understanding of the diversity of needs met by the cedar; by providing them with an occasion to be munificent themselves, in organizing and holding the Cedar Feast. <p>Students would listen to, read, and write stories and poems that illustrated these qualities. Readings would include both traditional First Nation stories and European fables and fairy tales, as well as, possibly, tales from other cultures.</p>	<p><i>What extremes of reality are related to the topic – biggest, hottest, oldest, richest?</i></p> <p>To develop an appreciation of the cedar’s extraordinary characteristics, it might be compared to other trees and plants (“lesser nobles and chiefs”) in the temperate rainforest, showing how cedar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has the largest girth - has the greatest height - has the straightest grain - has the most fragrant smell - has the toughest roots - and so on. <p>Students could develop “tall tales” or other kinds of stories in which these characteristics of cedar play an important role, or they could tell the story of the Cedar Family and how it came to be recognized as the ruler of the forest.</p>	<p><i>What parts of the topic can students best explore in exhaustive detail? How can students present their knowledge in some systematic form?</i></p> <p>Students (in groups) might be given a number of terms in the local Aboriginal language to research, each term referring to something made from cedar or associated with cedar in some way. They would then find out everything they could about those topics. This would include interviewing at least one elder or community member, telling a story (or making a song) in which the terms and objects featured, presenting a chart showing the steps involved in making or using the objects, and so on.</p>	

Looking Forward and Concluding

Cedar, the Munificent Monarch

Towards Further Understanding	A Celebratory Ending	Assessment
<p><i>How can the unit develop embryonic forms of Philosophic and Ironic understanding? What cognitive tools characteristic of the disciplines or embodied self-awareness can be introduced here?</i></p> <p><i>(Note: teachers should be sparing in their use of these additional tools, only introducing them when they believe a strong Romantic understanding of the topic has been developed.)</i></p> <p>What plants have served similar functions for peoples in other parts of the world?</p> <p>Why do the cedar's characteristics make it well-adapted to life in this particular climate and ecosystem?</p> <p>How do biologists study the cedar and the temperate rainforest? How do biologists' understandings resemble or differ from those of people who rely on the cedar and its forest for their livelihood?</p> <p>Why are respect and munificence not seen as important in modern culture, at least not to the extent they were in traditional cultures?</p>	<p><i>What is the best way of resolving the dramatic tension inherent in the unit? What communal project or activity will enable the students to experience and share this resolution?</i></p> <p>The Cedar Feast would involve as many uses of cedar as possible, including as ornament and serving vessel. Community members (those interviewed by students, perhaps along with others) would be invited as honoured guests. Students would prepare speeches, songs, dances, in honour of the cedar, using traditional Aboriginal terms and phrases as well as English.</p>	<p><i>How can one know whether the topic has been understood, its importance grasped and the content learned?</i></p> <p>Student projects would provide evidence about students' understanding of the uses of cedar and their mastery of literate genres (stories, poems, interviews, visual display of information).</p> <p>Participation in the Cedar Feast would provide evidence of students' understanding of the themes of respect and munificence.</p> <p>A game might be developed based on the Aboriginal terms, for instance where students act out the use of a particular item or its making from raw materials, providing evidence of their understanding of the terms.</p>