

'Well,' he said, 'I bought a book that I've got right here with me. It's the best book I've ever seen. It has such-and-such in it.'

[Then he added], 'By Allah, I'll sit here and read this book, and tell you what's inside.'

Then he opened the book, started to read and said, 'Brothers?'

'Yes'' they answered.

[Then he said], 'You see, our father is ill. Look, [and you'll see him] on his death bed, passing away little by little.'

Then he slammed the book shut, shouting, 'Where are you, the one with the carpet?'

Your have heard me, little coffee pot, and you too, teapot!

So they brought the carpet. Then he spread it out for them to sit down on it, and struck it [with the whip]. They all said, 'Kuwait!' and the wind carpet flew away in the twinkling of an eye—like Solomon's carpet had brought Bilqis, Queen of Sheba. And in the twinkling of an eye they found themselves back in their own country. Then he rolled up the carpet, while one of [the brothers] held his book in his hand and the other his frying pan.

[Listen], teapot and you, too, little coffee pot!

So they came running, but their father had just died. Their father had died. Then [the brother who had bought the frying pan] said, 'Where are you! Where are you! Come, come, give us, give us, give us a little water!'

[When they'd fetched him some water], he took it and poured it onto his father. His father sneezed, then suddenly sat up.

[So tell me], little coffee pot and you, too, teapot, who gets the credit: the carpet that brought them so quickly to [their destination], the book which, when [one of them] opened it, let them see that their father was ill, or the one who brought him back to life?

[Then] the girl said, 'The one who poured water over him and restored his spirit.'

'Nobody was talking to you!' he retorted, 'I was talking to the coffee pot and the teapot! Now listen, you witnesses.'

'I tell you,' said [the girl], 'it's the one who brought him back to life, who dumped the water on him so that he lived again! If it weren't for him, they would have gone off and buried him.'

[Then three time he said [to the others], 'You are my witnesses!'

The next morning, the sisters, said to their father, 'Come! Your daughter has gotten so engrossed in the prince's story, she's practically in his lap! She's not only speaking, but she's about to fall over him!'

So without further ado, they brought the judge to perform the wedding ceremony. After he'd married the princess, he stayed in her father's house for several months. After that, her father provided them with all they'd need for their journey, and he travelled [with his bride] back to his own country. [When he arrived], he was received by his father.

'Father.' Said the son, 'I've brought her [with me]!'

[As for me], I left them and came back.

May the peace and mercy of Allah be upon you.

'One thousand dinars,' said the man.
'Here's a thousand dinars,' he said. Then he took the carpet, rolled it up, took the whip with him and left. When he came to his brothers' house, they said to him, 'It's look like you brought yourself a carpet today. But why a carpet?'

'Well,' he said, 'it's true that it's small, but it's powerful.'
Listen well, little coffee pot, and you also, teapot. Listen, Listen! He bought this carpet for a thousand dinars, and he said to his brothers, 'This carpet has tremendous power.'

'What exactly can it do?' they asked him.
He replied, 'You sit on it and strike it with the whip. Then it will take you straightaway wherever you want to go. And it will get you there quickly, like the carpet of Allah's Prophet Solomon, the carpet that would ride on the wind.'

The next day, the second brother went out walking around and looking for something to buy with his money. He happened to pass by a man at the auction with a frying pan in his hand. He was shouting, 'How much will you bid for this frying pan? Eight hundred dinars, eight hundred fifty, eight hundred seventy-five, nine hundred!'

'What!,' [said the young man], 'a frying pan that size for nine hundred dinars?! What so special about it?'

'It's none of your business, son,' replied the man, 'Besides, it wouldn't be any good for you anyway.'

'Tell me more about it, and I'll buy it,' [said the young man]. How much [do you want for it]? I'm a merchant.'

You hear what I'm saying, teapot, and you, little coffee pot!
In any case, the man said, 'This frying pan-Allah keep you-as soon as you fill it with water and pour it out onto someone who has died, the deceased [person] will sneeze and come back to life again.'

'Great! Said [the second brother]' 'That's something truly remarkable. Here's a thousand dinars.'

Then he took the frying pan and left. In any case, he came to see his brothers, who started asking him about the frying pan,

'I bought it for a thousand dinars,' he said,

'What!' [they exclaimed].

'You see, as soon as I fill it with water and pour it onto someone who's died, he'll come back to life just like that.'

You hear [what I've said], little coffee pot, and you too, teapot. This story is for you.
Then on the third day, the third [brother] went into the market after going out walking. When he entered, he happened to pass by a man who had a small book and was calling,

'What will you give me for this book?'

[Someone bid] one hundred, [another] two hundred, [another] three hundred, [and some] bid even higher.

So the young man said, '[Do you mean to tell me that] a little book like that would fetch five or six hundred dinars?'

'It certainly would,' [replied the man], 'how would you know what it has in it?'

'Tell me about what's inside it, and I'll bid on it, too,' [said the young man].

You hear [what I'm saying], little coffee pot, and you too, teapot. Listen!
[The man explained], 'If you open this, you'll see the whole world inside.'

'What's the highest price anyone has bid on it?' [asked the third brother].

'Nine hundred, nine hundred fifty, a thousand,' the man replied.

'Here's a thousand dinars,' he said. Then he took the book and went to see his brothers.

'What did you buy?' they asked.

"Shh, he replied, "We weren't talking to you! Listen O witness. You've heard [that the girl spoke]. And I want you little coffee pot and you, too, teapot, to tell me whose the doll should be."

The king's daughter said again, "I told you, she belongs to the one who sent down a spirit into her!"

"We didn't ask you!" he said to her, "we were talking to the coffee pot and the teapot.

Listen to this, O witness!"

Three times he asked [the princess's sister], "Well, didn't she speak?"

"You're right," she replied, "she did speak."

The next morning, the older [daughter] went to her father and said, "Father, your daughter spoke not just one time, but three."

"Amazing," he said, "Impossible!"

Then the king came to the young man and said to him, "This isn't acceptable. I fear that you've deceived her, or that you've put something in her food or drink. So tonight you must repeat the test."

"Alright," he said, "Tonight is shall be."

When night fell, they brought him the coffee pot, the teapot and the tray filled with hot coals. They also brought along her two other sisters to stay [nearby as witnesses]. The sisters sat down and he said, "O coffee pot and teapot, yesterday we told a story, but no one believed it. Tonight I'm going to tell another one, and I want you, coffee pot and you, teapot, to listen very carefully, then decide who has the right to the doll."

Then he went on saying, "Well, once upon a time there was a king. This king had three sons, but his sons were all idle. So one day the king said to them, 'Sons'

'Yes,' [they replied].

'Come along,' he said, 'and I'll give you some business to undertake. Go learn how to trade: how to buy and sell. That's certainly better than for you to sit here doing nothing.'

'By gosh, that's a great idea!' they replied.

[The king] said, 'Each of you should take a thousand dinars, then set off on a journey with Allah blessing.'

So each of them took a thousand dinars from his father and set out. They came to Egypt, Sudan and other countries of the Arabs. When they arrived, they stayed in an inn, and the next morning each of them got dressed and went out looking for business. The first day one of them went to the auction ground. When he went in, he heard a man shouting, 'How much do you say? How much? How much do you say? How much...? Nine hundred dinars..Nine hundred dinars...'

He said to [the auctioneer], 'My God, for a carpet that's only big enough to hold four people, you want nine hundred dinars? What's so special about this carpet, anyway?'

[The auctioneer] replied, 'That's something you don't know, isn't it?'

You've heard [me], little coffee pot, and you, teapot. Listen, listen! Listen to this sweet story!

Then [the auctioneer] said to him, 'Go away, this is none of your business.'

'But sir,' he said, 'please tell me.'

'I tell you, it's none of your business!'

If I knew the secret [behind this carpet], I'd bid on it,' [said the young man].

When he heard this, the auctioneer said. 'If you sit with your friends on this carpet and hold this whip in your hand, then strike the carpet with the whip, it will whisk you off to wherever you want to go. If you tell it you want to go to such and such a country, it will take you there in no time. It's faster than an airplane. In fact, it's as quick as lightning,' 'Amazing,' said the young man, 'like a miracle from almighty Allah! Alright then, how much do you want for it?'

"Let her older sister come and sit nearby. She'll sit nearby. I'll tell a story, and if [the princess] speaks, she speaks. If not, that's that. Have off my head the next morning. I want her sister to be a witness for her."

So when night fell, they brought in the [king's] daughter and put her in one corner [of the room]. [They also brought] her sister in and put her in another corner. Then they brought in the tray with the tea and coffee on it.

The young man sat there drinking coffee and said, I have a story, and I'm going to tell it to this teapot, this coffee pot and these cups. Then we'll see if they speak or not. Listen here, teapot, and be my witness, little coffee pot:

"Once there were three friends who had made up their minds to go on a journey. So off they went. And as you know, they weren't going to be travelling in a car or an airplane the way people do nowadays. In those days people travelled on camels, donkeys and mules. Anyway, they decided to go on a trip. One of them was a tailor, one was a Muslim cleric,² and one was either a carpenter or a shipbuilder—one of two. But they were all friends. They got all their provisions ready, then each of them got on his donkey and they set off riding side by side. And they were all making this journey for purposes of trade or work or some such thing.

Listen well, teapot, and be our witness, little coffee pot! Then one night they set up their tent and said, 'We can't go on doing things this haphazard way. Instead, each of us should keep watch for a third of the night. One can guard the camp for the first third of the night, another can keep watch during the middle third, and the other can take the third after that.'

They all said 'By Allah, that's a fine idea. Now who's going to stay awake during the first third? Who'll keep guard during the first [third]?'

'I will,' said the carpenter.

The first night watch—you have heard me, little pot, and you too, teapot. We shall see what story I have for you. Then the carpenter got up and took the first shift. When he got bored just sitting there, he opened up the bag with his carpenter tools in it. He also picked up a board that he had on hand and set about making a wooden toy for himself. And he finished it just as his shift was ending.

Next the tailor got up and washed his face. He sat there looking around, and what should he see [before him] but an image of a wooden doll.

'Amazing,' he said, 'I mean, I just can't get over it!'

So he got up and went to open his bag. He got a piece of cloth, then brought out his sewing machine, sewed her some clothes and dressed her up in them. By the time the second watch had ended, the wooden doll was all decked out in new clothes. Then the cleric woke up, and the tailor put down his head and went to sleep.

After the next call to prayer, the cleric woke up. He did his ritual ablutions, performed his prayers, then turned around and what should he see but this doll.

Here, now, teapot and you too little coffee pot, listen closely to what I'm saying to you!

By this time, both of the sisters were awestruck. So, he went on, after the cleric had performed the morning prayer, he did two more prostrations, asking Allah blessed and exalted is He—answered his prayers. A spirit was sent down into the doll, and she became human.

"So now, little coffeepot and you, too, teapot, tell me who has the right to the doll now—the carpenter, the tailor or the cleric?"

When he asked this question, suddenly [the king's daughter] said, "She belongs to the one who caused a spirit to be sent down into her."

² The word "Sayid" in Arabic does not translate exactly to cleric. "Sayid" is a religious man who is a descendent from the Prophet Mohammed. The Shait Moslem specifically believe in Sayid's power.

So she went and said to him, "You know, your son doesn't believe that you've really agreed to let him go."

So the father came and spoke to the boy, saying, "Yes, son, I really do give you my permission to go. First get completely well, then I'll give you some money and you can relax and go your way."

Several months later, the king's son had fully recovered and was in excellent health. So his father started getting him ready and supplying him with everything he needed [for his journey]. He gave him money and goods to offer as the bride price. Then, the son, set off on his journey, passing through one valley after another, so let your prayers be upon Muhammad the rightly guided one (Oh Allah, may your prayers and peace be upon him). Finally, he reached the country [he was headed for]. He reached that country and stayed in Khaan—an inn. (In those days there weren't any hotels, only roadside inns). So he stayed in an inn, then left his belongings and went out to the market to walk around for a day or two or three.

When he got to the market, he asked how to get to the king's court. He was told, "That's it, there on the seashore—that splendid palace overlooking the ocean. Go ahead and pay him a visit!"

So the next morning, he goes to the palace.

"Peace be upon you? [he said].

"And upon you be peace" came the reply.

Then he took a seat and after he'd gotten rested up, they brought him Arabic coffee.

Then the king said to him, "So, boy, it seems you're a stranger in these parts."

"Well, yes, I am," he replied.

"Where are you from? Asked the king.

[He answered], I'm the son of such-and-such a king (like the king of Iraq or the king of Iran or others of their like)."

"Have you come to trade with our country? Asked [the king].

"Well, no, not really," he said. "I've come to ask for your daughter's hand."

"My daughter?" said [the king].

"Yes," [he replied].

"Does your father have any sons besides you?"

"No,"

"No," [he replied].

"Is your father aware of the conditions for being granted my daughter's hand?"

"Yes, he is," he said.

"Then how could he have agreed to let you come, casting you into the jaws of death? [asked the king].

"Well, sir," [he replied], "it isn't necessarily true that I'll die. Perhaps I'll succeed in winning the girl."

[Said the king], "The conditions, you see, are such and such and such and such and that's that! Then you're a goner!"

Then the king brought him to a room, somewhere in the palace. He opened the door and said, "Take a look at these skulls. All of them belonged to princes. Every [suitor] that my daughter makes no reply to, I have off his head."

"Fine, then," said the young man, "but I also have a condition to make."

"What's that?" asked the king.

"I'll go in and speak to your daughter on condition that you bring in a little pot for making Arabic coffee, a cup, a teapot, and a raised metal tray with coal in it. Doesn't the princess have any sisters?"

"She has one older sister and one younger one," [replied the king]."

Appendix
"The Story of the King's Silent Daughter"¹
(May Your Prayers Be Upon Muhammad)

Once upon a time there was a king who ruled over one of the world's empires. This king had one son, and both this son and his mother were very dear to the king's heart. In any case, he gave his son a good upbringing year after year until he grew up and became a man.

[Then one day] the king's ministers said to him, "O king, you know this only son of yours, why don't you marry him off?"

"Why, that's a lovely idea," [replied the king]. So he went and said to his son, "Son; wouldn't you like for me to arrange for you to be married?"

"But father, I'm not ready to get married yet," [he replied].

"No, son," [said his father], "You're a man now, and I want to see your children, Allah (God) willing, while I'm still alive. And may Allah-blessed and exalted is He-grant you righteous offspring!"

"Let me think it over," [said the son].

Then the son went and asked his friends, "Which of the kings' daughters might be good [for me]? Who is there [to choose from]?" They replied, "There's a king in Morocco who has a daughter, but he imposed severe conditions [on anyone who asks for her hand.]"

"What conditions do you mean?" he asked.

"The suitor has to go in and talk with the princess even though she doesn't speak. If she does say something, he can take her and marry her. But if she doesn't, her father will chop off his head."

When he heard this about the princess, she gained favor in his eyes.

"I want her," said the king's son [to himself or to his friends].

Then he went to his father and said, "You see, father, the story is thus and so."

But the king said, "No son. No, no, no! She won't do! I'm afraid that you'll go and not be able to pass the test. Then that tyrannical king will have off with your head and I don't know what all else! I hear he's brutally murdered many people and stolen their money. He's not trying to marry off his daughter—all he wants is to steal everybody's wealth!"

But his son insisted, "This is the girl I'm going to marry. If I can't have her, I don't want anyone at all."

The son went on like this day after day, day after day, until finally he fell ill and was even on the verge of death.

Then his mother said to [her husband, the king], "Listen, good man, the least we can do is let him go. Maybe he'll be successful and win the girl. And if he dies, so be it; he's about to perish as it is!"

"By Allah," said the king, "What you say is true. Go tell him that he has his father's consent."

So she went to her son and said, "Listen, [son], your father has given his consent."

When he heard what she'd said, his spirits revived a bit. At first he just smiled at the news she's brought, and then broke into laughter. They brought him some food, so he ate a bit, then a little more, then a little more until he's completely recovered.

"Mother," he said, "is it really true that my father has given his consent?"

"Yes," she said, "I swear it's true. I'll go and ask him again."

¹ The story is narrated to me by Mr. Yousef Al-Haddad and translated by Ali Al-Jafar.

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usage of the Prophet's name does not connote a religious meaning but rather is employed as an aesthetic technique to capture the audience's attention to maintain the poetic rhyme, and as a participatory element which the people repeat together.

Conclusion

This project is an example of how a listener or a reader approaches a story by identifying with a character but at the same time applying his/her knowledge of the content discussed. My participant identified with the silent daughter. I believe this association influenced her interpretation and the points she chose to analyze. However, she developed her interpretation by drawing upon her knowledge of the Arab culture and her folklore studies.

My participant and I took two different approaches to interpreting the text. These approaches can be compared to the insider/outsider relationship reflected by a tourist and a native. When a tourist visits a foreign country and buys a souvenir, for him/her it represents the culture. For the native who made the souvenir, it is an art. My participant began by looking at the structures/institutions that identify a society. I concentrated on the structure of the story and its performative role within the society. I related the story to a larger literary and social context. I compared the story to other stories in the storytelling tradition. *One Thousand and One Nights* and *Kalila and Dimana* are two examples of the intertextual analysis I used in interpreting the story. Finally, in the dialogue we moved from analyzing structures to a more profound aesthetical analysis. Our discussion of the ritual of drinking coffee and tea, is an example of how we were able to merge our different approaches, and arrive at a new understanding of the story.

What I learned from this project can be divided into two categories: from my participant and from my narration. From the former, I learned about the Native American culture – its religion, and its discursive techniques. In addition, through my participant's interpretation of the text, my voice was given meaning in this project. From the latter, I learned how important it is to provide an accurate translation to convey the meaning of the stories. One word such as "Sayid" translated to cleric affected my participant's interpretation of the entire story. Next time that I narrate this story or other stories that have terms that do not translate the cultural specific meaning into the other language, I will provide cultural footnotes for the reader.

For cross cultural teacher education, this project can serve as an example to point out the complexity of cultural interpretation. The project demonstrates the different levels of cultural and social representation in a text and the depth of interpretation that is possible in understanding the text, and ultimately the culture. For the purposes of teacher education, prior to the use of a text from another culture, having knowledge and understanding the cultural beliefs and the literary tropes utilized in the text is crucial. Finally, if this project manifests many levels of interpretation which are possible within one "story," then, we can expect innumerable levels required to understand a "culture" adequately.

Final Comments from the Primary Voice

In our last conversation I asked my participant about the whole project and if it had been worthwhile or not. She was pleased with the results, the analysis of the tale, but more importantly, learning about the culture. I also mentioned how her interpretations led me to new ways of analysing the text. I asked my participant what were her final thoughts about the story and what she learned. The following is her reply:

First of all, I learned from your interpretation that the audience comes with prior knowledge. If the story is narrated within the culture, the audience is familiar with other stories within the culture so the narrator can make references to them. The interpretation is limited to the content of the text if you do not have prior knowledge.

I also learned how symbols influence the interpretation. Like the teapot and what it represents in the culture, the teapot is a symbol of the gathering and conversation. If an object like that is mentioned in the story and the audience does not know its cultural significance (when it is used, who uses it, why) they will lose a lot of the meaning of the story. As far as the religious references are concerned, I learned how important religion is in the culture, how it is interwoven into daily life, and the role it plays in the stories.

Reflections

In our discussion, I was using a discursive technique with you that we use in our culture. I do not know if you were aware of that or not. One of the techniques is that we argue. Arguing is a positive element. It is very necessary in the sense that it invokes a disagreement. You disagree, argue, and challenge in order to reach an understanding. It is like a reversal. You want to present all the doubts and points of disagreement, everything that is questionable. Sometimes you might not disagree, but you will do that anyway, just to test if you are really sure of what you are saying. In the end you can agree or at least reach an understanding.”

Unlike the format in the first part in which my participant spoke first, in the dialogue part, the format of the discussion is reversed. I led the conversation by commenting on my participant's interpretation and my participant elaborated upon my comments. The dialogue focused on the aesthetic elements of the story. The discussions rendered several levels of interpretation. For example, similar to the journey, we first moved physically through the text discussing relevant issues to contemporary scholars such as power, gender, and religion. Then, we approached the text examining abstract issues such as time and space. Finally, we juxtaposed both the physical and the abstract journey or exploration as the stories were juxtaposed in the text. In addition, my participant and myself took an exploratory journey through our thoughts and interpretation. Surprisingly, we indirectly incorporated the storytelling technique as a form of analysis.

For example, my participant in the first part of the interpretation focuses on the domination of the religious elements in the story. She pointed out that these elements represent power in the form of an authoritative figure and his followers. However, in our dialogue I presented a different view of the role of power in storytelling. Unlike the relationship between a political authority and those he rules, the power dynamics between the storyteller and his audience is not one of domination but rather an artistic one. Rulers in many countries obtain their power by using force; by contrast, the storyteller is chosen by the people in a democratic fashion. The storyteller represents the people by selecting stories that reflect their voice – culture, hopes, beliefs, and religion. Furthermore, the

The Woman's Role

Primary Voice

I learned that the woman is not a direct participant. The only way that she can participate is by refusing not to participate. As a passive participant, the daughter, as an object, is utilized by the kings to negotiate or exercise their political power, and by the son to obtain his manhood. In addition, the daughter's father manipulates the silence in order to increase his wealth through the dowries men pay in advance to obtain the daughter. The statement being made here with the notion of silence is very important. Characterizing the daughter without a public voice suggests not only a physical silence but perhaps, also, a social and cultural one. Employing the silence that has already been designated to her, the daughter is able to voice her choice of husband. By not speaking, she is able to screen potential husbands until one she likes is presented- then she speaks. Ironically, even though the goal of the story is to get her to speak, when she does, her Primary Voices controlled. The son says to her: "We weren't talking to you," preventing her to continue. He wants her to speak, but only when he allows her to do so.

The Silent Voice. Is silence in the story a passive or an active statement? Does the story free the son to choose his bride and the silent daughter to choose her groom? In order to get the daughter to speak more than once so the sisters can witness her speaking, the son continues speaking to his objects (teapot and coffee pot). He did not control her but rather try to get her to speak so the witnesses can approve it.

Witnessing

Primary Voice

The idea of having a witness, I guess, refers back to Islamic laws or Islamic practices; having a witness is similar to getting legal proof. And, the idea that the son has to repeat the story to get the daughter to speak not only once but twice to have it witnessed, follows in these lines.

The Silent Voice. I observed that my participant empathized with the female character. She interpreted the son controlling the daughter's speech, but later when she was reflecting upon the story as a whole, she considered the cultural factors that guided the son's actions.

Marriage

Primary Voice

The concept of marriage in this story is different from that in the West. In the story, marriage does not involve the relationship between two individuals, but rather it is a vehicle for political purposes. Marriage can also be interpreted as a rite of passage. I say a rite of passage because the son is coming of age or becoming a man. How can he become a man? He has to marry. Marriage is one way to show his manliness in order to enter manhood. The rite of passage is also a way for the man to demonstrate his bravery, determination, and courage to the public. By taking on a challenge, he makes a public statement. In this story the challenge is to get the Moroccan king's silent daughter to speak. Why does he choose this challenge when many other men have lost their lives in this quest? If one wants to make big statement, one chooses the most difficult challenge; a

The Silent Voice. When my participant talked about the domination of the religious elements in the story, I was thinking about the storyteller who is the soul of the community and interprets the life of that culture. Why is s/he using these religious elements? Is it because s/he knows the culture well therefore, s/he uses religion as a key to open closed doors?

Primary Voice

The most important thing that sticks out in my mind about the first story the son narrated to the silent daughter is the binary opposition between religions. There is a debate taking place between traditional and contemporary religion. This manifests itself through the doll and the spirits. When they talk about supernatural spirits, they refer to Allah like being a supernatural spirit; but then there are these undertones of another spirit which I interpret as the traditional or the folk religion. When they bring the doll to life or render her alive, a religious figure, the cleric, accomplishes it but at the same time there is another supernatural force that puts the spirit into the doll. I found this story debating these two religious beliefs metaphorically throughout the story.

The Silent Voice. There is a translation problem with the word cleric. The word "Sayid" in Arabic does not translate exactly to cleric. "Sayid" is a religious man who is a descendent from the Prophet Mohammed. The Shiat Moslems specifically believe in Sayid's power. The power of Sayid can be considered as part of the folk belief too.

The Patriarchal Authority

Primary Voice

Another thing I learned is how different ruling groups negotiate their social and political powers. For example, selecting a wife for marriage is defined by the socio-political make-up of the two kingdoms, within this story. Marriage is in fact a form of negotiation between the two kingdoms. Indicative of this negotiation is when the son goes to the kingdom of Morocco. The Moroccan king is really not talking to the son; he is talking to the son, yet addressing the father, the king. The whole dialogue is, in fact, taking place not between the king and the son but between the two kings. The whole political aspect of power comes into play in reaching an agreement. When the king asks the son: "Does your father know what the stipulations for marrying my daughter are?" the son says, "yes." "Ok." This understanding between the kings has to be very clear from the very beginning before the son can even engage into the whole idea of marriage.

The Silent Voice. Is this a stereotype of the Arabic culture? I am not surprised by my participant's interpretation. In the United States and other Western countries the stereotype is that in the Arabic culture men control everything. That is true in some countries, but not in this story. Indeed, one of the messages of this story is the freedom of choice to marry. When the king asks his son to marry, the son asks his father for time to think about it. The son asked his friends, not his relative, who is the best woman to marry? This question is important because, traditionally, the son would marry his cousin. Choosing a wife from another country has many implications. Can the son choose the woman he wants to marry? Will his choice free his female cousin to marry someone else? Furthermore, the father begs his son not to marry the Moroccan king's daughter because many princes have been killed trying to marry the daughter. It is the son who insists to marry. I am surprised why my participant has ignored these points and has focused on the political aspects.

What Can a Folktale Tell Us About a Culture: An Interpretive Study

Abstract:

This study focuses on what can be learned from folktales; and specifically, how the interpretation of folktales can be an occasion for cross-cultural learning. To explore my thesis question, I narrated a Kuwaiti folktale (The King's Silent Daughter, see Appendix for the complete text) to my participant who is a Ph.D student in folklore. She is Native American. Educational, semiotical, hermeneutical, and folklore have shaped our conceptual framework. The method I utilized was an informal interview and storytelling. The general format was conversational. The question/answer technique was used only to elicit specific responses. Storytelling is used to stimulate ideas and to provide the basis for the dialogue. The oral interviews are used to draw the participant's response and to exchange interpretations.

For teacher education, this project can serve as an example to point out the complexity of cultural interpretation. The project demonstrates the different levels of cultural and social representation in a text and the depth of interpretation that is possible in understanding the text, and ultimately the culture.



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