

Judson Vagabond Puppets

Two Fairy Tales from Ancient Japan:

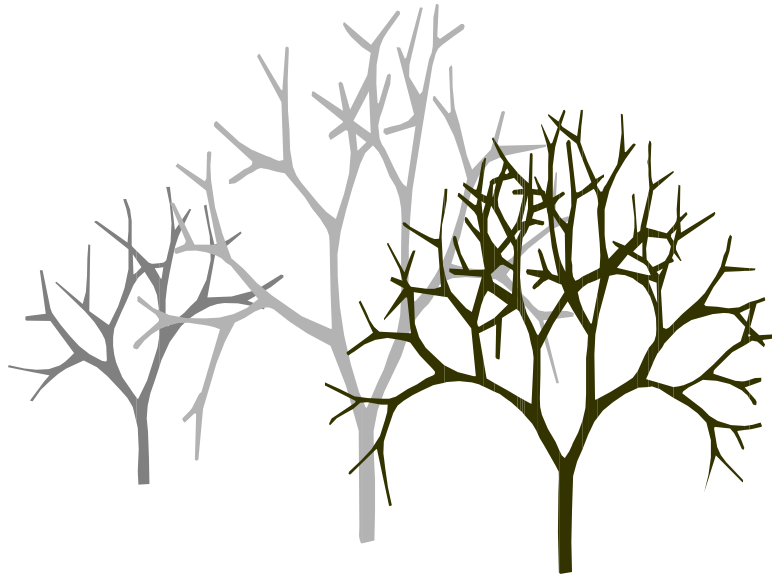
ONIROKU &

MOMOTARO, THE PEACH BOY



What is a Folktale?

A Folktale is a story that has deep roots in a culture. The story is handed down from generation to generation, mother to daughter, father to son, grandfather to granddaughter, and so on. When a child grows up, he or she passes the story on to the next generation.



What is Folklore?

A collection of folktales in a culture is the culture's folklore. Scientists and scholars spend years studying folklore for clues about the people who live there. They look at the folklore for the things the stories have in common.

Some characters appear in stories throughout the world:

- A Hero
- A Villain
- A Young Innocent

The World is a round ball spinning through space. It is mostly covered with water, but there are 7 continents:

Africa

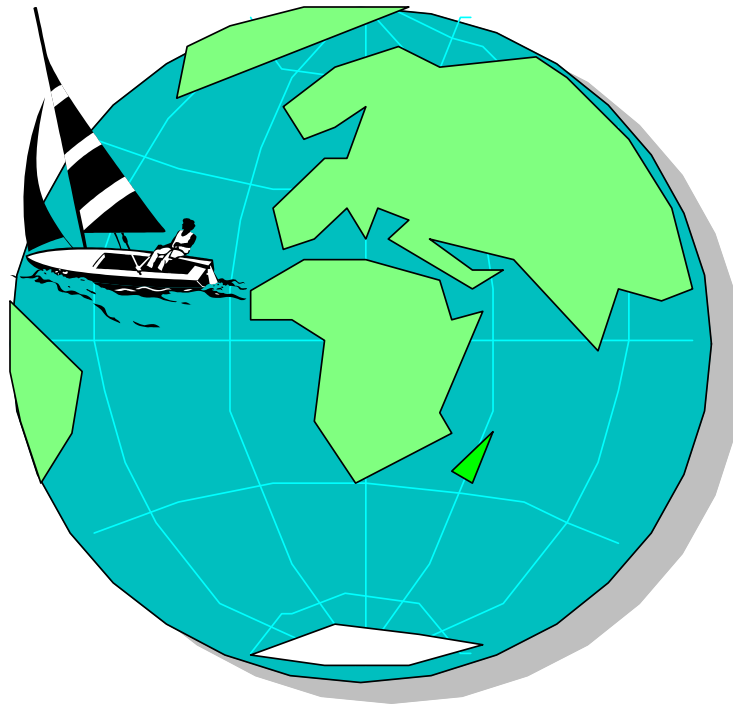
Antarctica

Asia

Australia

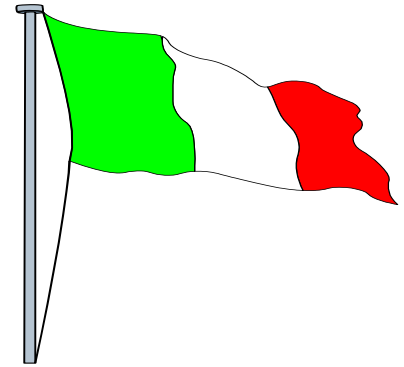
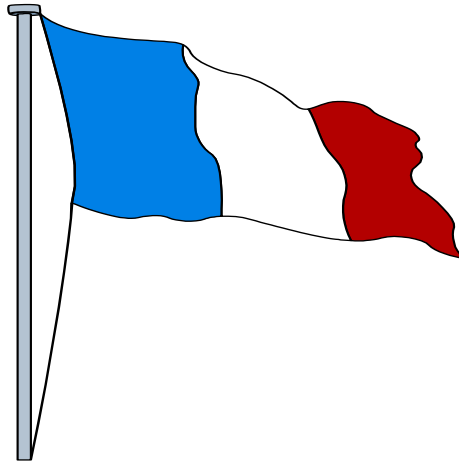
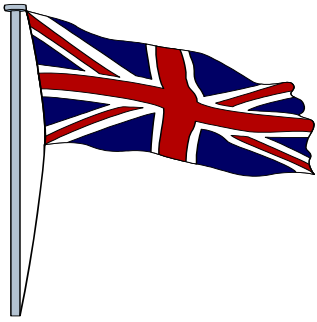
Europe

North America



Each Continent has several countries. Each country has a culture and it's own language. The folk tales of a culture were originally told in that country's "native" language.

Oniroku and *Momotaro, the Peach Boy* were originally told in Japanese. Do you know any stories that were originally written in another language? Changing words into another language is called "translation".

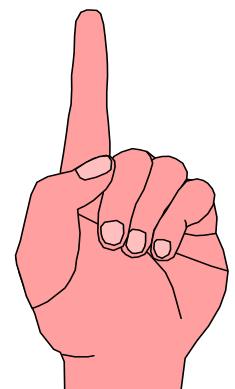
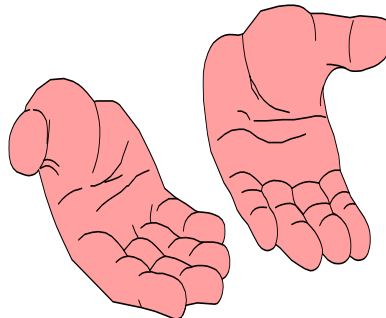


What Makes a Country?

Just as every country has a flag with certain colors, so each country has a set of stories about the people who live there.

Discussion: What is a country? Discuss the difference between a country and a culture. How do other countries do things differently? Why?

Exercise: Tell a well-known story in English. See if you can tell the same story without any sound at all using gestures and physical actions. Tell the story again, this time using gibberish, grunts, noises, and nonsense song. Did the audience still understand the story? Did you use sign language?



Oniroku and Momotaro, the Peach Boy

are stories that are deeply rooted in the Japanese culture, just as the stories of Paul Bunyan are rooted in the culture of the United States. Some stories in different cultures are about exactly the same subject. Some stories use exactly the same characters, and some have exactly the same events!

In the story of *Oniroku*, the hero, Taro the Carpenter, has to defeat the villain by guessing his name. It is astonishing that the same story told in *Rumplestiltskin* is found almost all the way across the world in Japan. There is no evidence to suggest that the story was passed from one culture to the other. On the contrary, it seems to have sprung up at the same time in both cultures.

If you look carefully, you'll find that the story of *Thumbelina* has a lot in common with the Japanese story of *Momotaro, the Peach Boy*.



Discussion: How do people learn to appreciate other cultures? Why do people make fun of people from other cultures? How would we communicate with people who don't speak our language if we were to visit a foreign country?

Exercise: Sit in a circle. Beginning with one person and moving around the circle, start to tell a story. Each person can only say one sentence of the story followed by the word "period". When one person finishes his or her sentence, the next person takes over. Try to make the story as consistent as possible, so each person's sentence builds on the sentence before it.

Discussion: Talk about the story. Did unusual things come up? Where did they come from? What makes a good story? Talk about things that we all have in common that came

The Story of *Oniroku*

The people of a small Japanese village must keep rebuilding the bridge they need to take their produce to market, for the bridge is constantly torn down during the night. A young girl named Peachling travels to the city to enlist the aid of Taro, the best carpenter in the province. Taro agrees to help the villagers and falls in love with Peachling, and she with him.

Taro discovers that the river demon is tearing down the bridges. Taro makes a bargain with the demon that depends upon Taro guessing the demon's name. Finally, Taro sees him with two baby demons in the enchanted forest and overhears the secret name. When Taro guesses the name "Oniroku", the demon, in a terrible rage, disappears forever.

The Story of *Momotaro, the Peach Boy*

Momotaro, the Peach Boy is the story of an old man and an old woman that have never been able to have a child. They are lonely. While she washes her clothes, the woman is very surprised by the appearance of a huge peach floating down the stream. She brings the peach home and opens it, only to find a small boy nestled inside. "I'm Hungry!" he says, and eats up first one half of the peach, and then the other.

He grows up to be a fine young man, and one day takes his flute to the Ogre's island. He teams up with a Monkey, a Dog, and a Pheasant, and together they put the Ogre in his place. With a song played by Momotaro on the flute, they convince the Ogre to come back to the village and return all the treasures he had stolen.

Momotaro is presented with dancing, narration, and music. The characters are a combination of masks and puppets. The Ogre is built on a wheeled frame that bobs and flails wildly until he is tamed by the song of the flute. All the puppeteers wear black masks and gloves in the Japanese Bunraku tradition. The black figures are visible, but before long they seem to become shadows

The Puppets

Rod Puppets - This type of puppet has its head mounted firmly to a stick, or rod, which rests in a flagpole holder around the neck of the puppeteer. The head is controlled by turning the stick. Sometimes there are sticks attached to the hands of the puppet and the puppeteer uses them like chop sticks to move the puppet's hands.

HVP borrows certain techniques from the Japanese **Bunraku** style of puppetry. The puppeteers dress in black and hold the puppets in front of them. In the Japanese Bunraku puppet companies, three puppeteers manipulate each puppet. The puppet then can walk, dance, and defeat monsters with the help of the puppeteer.

Momotaro, the Peach Boy is a narrated dance with dancers in masks and with large and small puppets. One puppet (the pheasant) even sits on top of the puppeteer's head.

The Ogre is a large automated puppet. Give him a push and he swings back and forth, his legs and arms rotate furiously, his eyebrows jump up and down, his eyes look back and forth, and his mouth opens and closes. He moves all over! We think he's more funny than scary.

When you come to see the Hudson Vagabond Puppets perform the story of Oniroku and Momotaro, the Peach Boy, the puppeteers will show you how the puppets work at the end of the performance.

The Music to “Momotaro, the Peach Boy”

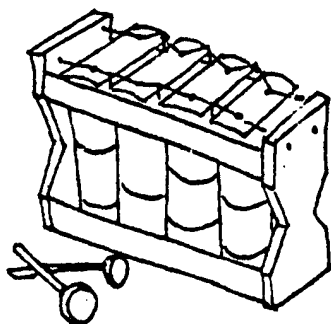
Momotaro, the Peach Boy is told with masks, puppets, dance and music. Like the tale of “Thumbelina”, it is a story about a man and a woman who wanted to have a child and received one by accident or magic or sheer good luck.

Accompanying the dance is music composed by Barbara Benary and recorded for this production by Barbara and Steve Silverstein. The music for Momotaro is played on the following instruments:

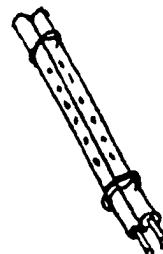
1. Cornett (Renaissance wind instrument)
2. Gamelon (Indonesian percussion)
3. Arab double reed pipe
4. Marimbas and gongs
5. Erh-hu (Chinese fiddle)
6. Tapan (Bulgarian Drum)



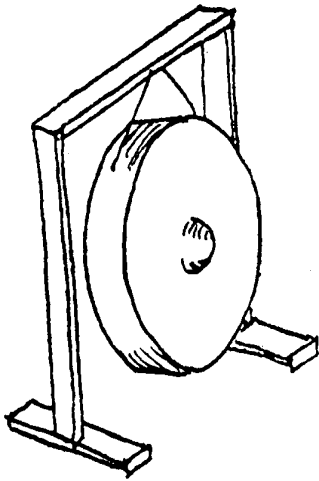
Cornett – curved wooden horn used in European music of the renaissance and baroque periods



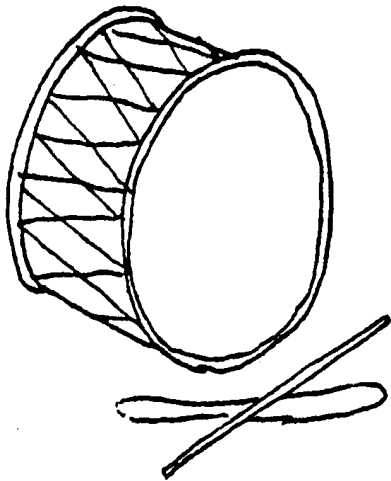
Gamelon – a set of small metallophones, each with only four notes, from the Balinese “angklung” gamelon ensemble



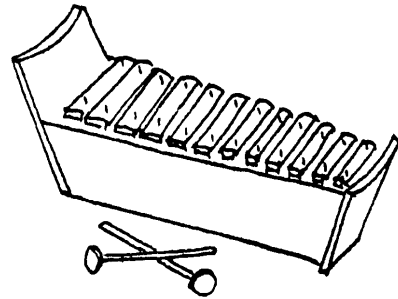
Arab Double pipe – two reed pipes bound side by side with single side beating reeds.



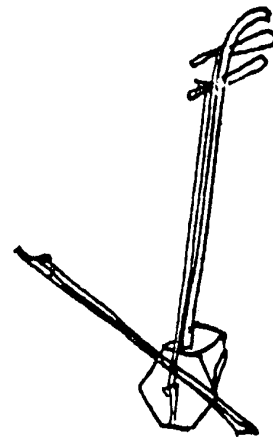
Gong – two are used, the higher is a flat brass gong, the lower is a knobbed gong constructed from an oil barrel, modeled on the gongs of Java and Bali.



Tapan – Bulgarian bass drum with two heads played with one light stick and one heavy one.



Marimba – a wooden keyed xylophone with a box resonator.



Erh-hu – Chinese fiddle with two closely set strings. The bow is fixed between the strings. The belly is made of skin.