

Lesson Plan for “Big Sandy Meets the Devil” by Kevin T. Brewer
published in the online anthology [Nobody’s Home: Modern Southern Folklore](#)

CCSS Standard(s): CCS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA R.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8; SL. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 ([ELA Anchor](#)) or alternately: CCS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.11-12.1 A-D, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 ([Social Studies](#))

Objective(s): To examine how local myths affect people’s behavior

Essential Question(s): What local myths exist in my community?

Preparation for Teacher (Strategy and Purpose): Consider this passage from [Bill Moyers’ 1988 interview with Joseph Campbell](#):

Moyers: So myths are stories of the search by men and women through the ages for meaning, for significance, to make life signify, to touch the eternal, to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are.

Campbell: People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that the life experiences that we have on the purely physical plane will have resonances within that are those of our own innermost being and reality. And so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive, that’s what it’s all finally about, and that’s what these clues help us to find within ourselves.

Then, read Kevin Brewer’s “Big Sandy Meets the Devil” as an example of a local myth that gave special meaning to a certain location.

Preparation of Students (Strategy and Purpose): Discuss myths, their uses, and their creation, preferably using Joseph Campbell’s ideas. Because many people think of myth as something untrue, it will be helpful to redefine the term as “a traditional story which embodies a belief regarding some fact or phenomenon of experience.” Whether a myth is true or untrue is less relevant than whether it affects or influences the behavior of those who buy into it.

In-class activities (recommended): Read “Big Sandy Meets the Devil” as an example of a narrative about a local myth. Discuss how Brewer treats this table about beliefs in the supernatural, including his perspective, word choice, and tone.

Lesson Follow-up (Recommendations): Students will choose or seek out a local myth or folktale, and explore its origins and its effects. This exploration might include interviewing and on-site firsthand discovery. Questions could include:

- What happened that led to the myth or folktale?
- What actions or evidence has kept the myth alive?
- Is the myth multigenerational, or was it confined to shorter time period?
- Do locals believe the myth, or is something circulated as possibly true?

Technology: SmartBoard, Elmo, other device for sharing the texts

Tiered Instruction/Intervention/Differentiation: Accommodations per needs, IEPs, or 504s

Assessment: Students will present their findings about the local myth that they chose. (Because some students will reach a dead end with the selected local myth, the rubric should reward effort, not simply the final product. For example, it would be better to grade on a minimum number of people interviewed or a required number of sources consulted, rather than on achieving a discovery about the underlying truth of the narrative.) These presentations will help students to see how many myths and narratives exist all around them

Homework: See follow-up and assessment suggestion above.

Comments: Students may be unwilling to discuss their own actions or the actions of their friends, if they have participated in trespassing or similar activities related to pursuing local myths and folk tales.