



Coqui Culture

This lesson may fit well as a follow-up to "Croaking Coquis"

Summary:

People may hold an appreciation for certain elements that are specific to where they live (natural, human-made, cultural, economic), even identifying themselves with such features/characteristics. Coqui frogs are such a natural element for people of Puerto Rico.

Background information:

It seems coqui frogs can be found everywhere on the island of Puerto Rico: in natural settings of course, but also in a dish rack (apparently the frogs like the moisture there), in a bowl of fruit in a household, on one's shirt, even in the middle of bustling paved San Juan.

There is an abundance of wares that market the appeal of the coqui frogs through T-shirts, caps, stuffed animals, postcards, and sound recordings of their calls. Coqui frogs bear a distinction of being an unofficial mascot for the island.

Materials:

- Computer lab with internet access for student use
- CD player
- DVD player/VCR
- CD of coqui frog calls
- DVD disk or VHS videotape of panned Puerto Rico countryside in the evening
- Stuffed animal coqui
- Picture of a coqui frogs on: T-shirts, cap
- Photos and videotape of coquis in different settings, and on people (for scale)
- Collection of assorted state quarters

Set-up:

Prepare the materials above for the activities below.

Procedure:

Activity 1:

- a. Explain to students that there are certain characteristics of people/a place with which people identify such people/a place. These may be natural features, living (plant, animal) and non-living (a mountain, swamp, water features). An area's culture may be particularly notable (Amish

Grade Level: 3-12

Goal: Develop an awareness/understanding of the appeal of a notable natural feature of Puerto Rico. The coqui frog, unofficial mascot-symbol of Puerto Rico.

Key concepts:

- People relate to certain aspects of environments, applying a symbolism relationship between these aspects and the setting for them.
- Certain things may be endemic to a special area of the world. People may identify with these things because their unique niche is where the people live.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Be able to identify that certain features are fairly representative of an area.
2. Make connections between the coqui frog and why some people in Puerto Rico identify with it.

Teaching locations:

Classroom
Computer lab with internet connections

Subject areas for infusion:

Science
Social studies

Standards:

Science
F.4.4

Social Studies
A.4.4
A.8.8
A.8.9

Environmental Education
A.4.3 B.8.12 C.8.1

community, a sacred area for Native Americans, a unique festival, downhill ski area, a sports team). An industry may be prominent (dairy products, ginseng, motorcycle production). There may be something human-made (House on the Rock, water parks). Some thing(s) may be endemic to an area (see the above definition and explain it to students).

Examine the following list:

Green Bay Packers
Cheese
Eiffel Tower
Piranhas
Pyramids
Hockey
Tortoises
Redwood trees
Lions
Wall Street
Anaconda
Beef cattle
Penguins
Tigers
Hurricanes
Kiwi
Kangaroo
Surfing
Grand Canyon

Vocabulary:

Features:

Natural: Produced solely by nature.

Human-made: Created by a person/people.

Cultural: Behavior patterns characteristic of a community -- behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, thought, institutions.

Economic: production, distribution, and consumption of commodities.

Endemic: Specific to a certain to a locality or people.

What helps us make connections for these things?

- b. Organize students into groups of 3-4 members. Pass out an assortment of state quarters to each group. Direct students to examine the features on U. S. state quarters. Have them categorize these features as natural, human-made, cultural, or economic. Are any of these specific strictly to one state (endemic)?
- c. In the same groups, have students brainstorm their own lists of notable area features for their region/community. Have students consider what constitutes good choices so that they can justify these ideas as reflecting their area. Are any of these specific only to the area (endemic)?
- d. Have groups share their lists with the whole class. The whole class can then discuss the merits of the ideas presented.

Activity 2:

- a. In the same groups as for activity 1, have students examine resources (books, websites, people from Puerto Rico) about Puerto Rico to identify elements that seem to be indicative of things particularly Puerto Rican. Students should then draw up a

list of these things. Question: Why would it be difficult to draft such a list (not being a resident of the area and not having the sense of living there)?

- b. Using internet resources, have students do a search for information on coqui frogs. Prime students to gather information about the animals in preparation for an assessment in which students will explain how coqui frogs may be a good choice for a symbol of Puerto Rico. Point out that coqui frogs are endemic to Puerto Rico.

Conclusion:

People choose a symbol for their locale based on various criteria: how representative of the area it is, prevalence, how people relate to it, emotional appeal, etc. What does a symbol reflect about an area and its people?

Assessment:

In writing, have students justify why coqui frogs are a good choice for a symbol of Puerto Rico. Students may wish to consider how other places in the world are represented by certain symbols, applying similar reasoning in what they write about the coqui frog. Have students comment about how the coqui frogs are endemic to Puerto Rico, and how that may have some bearing on its appeal as an animal representative of the country.

Extensions:

1. In upper grades, have students research why or how particular features of a place are where they are. Then surmise how certain symbols strike "a chord" with people in an area.
2. Consider what it is about coqui frogs that have so much appeal for people who live and visit Puerto Rico.

References:

Welcome to Puerto Rico

<http://welcome.topuertorico.org/coqui.shtml>

Coqui Organization

http://coqui.org/coqui/ECOQUI_3.jpg

Institute for Biological Invasions

<http://invasions.bio.utk.edu/invaders/coqui.html>

Puerto Rico El Yunque Photo Exhibit

<http://lmtnele.tripod.com/elyunque/id7.html>