



Cruchley's Collection

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her workshop are practical, include detailed handouts, and are always enthusiastically received.



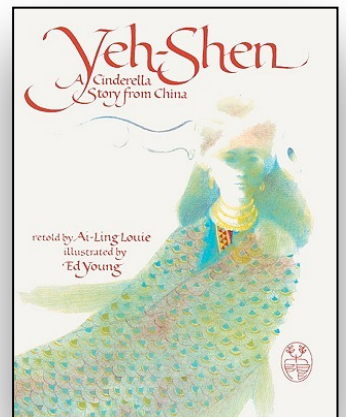
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Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China

Yeh-Shen was the orphan daughter in her stepmother's home, but the stepmother favoured her own daughter, Yeh-Shen's friend, the fish, would come out of the water, rest on the shore, and she should feed it from her scarce resources. The stepmother put on Yeh-Shen's coat, lured out the fish, and killed it. As Yeh-Shen grieved, an old man appeared and told her to retrieve the bones, for they had power to grant wishes. Yeh-Shen then wished on the bones for food. When the spring festival arrived (where young men and women could find partners) Yeh-Shen was not allowed to go. The bones of the fish made her an azure gown, a kingfisher feather cloak, and shoes of solid gold. When it looked like her step-mother would recognize her, she fled, leaving behind one gold slipper. In searching for his "bride" the king noticed Yeh-shen's tiny feet, and when she tried on the slipper, her spring festival clothes reappeared on her. Ta da!

Ai-Ling Louie, illustrated by Ed Young

©1982, Philomel Books, 978-0-399-21594-0



Teaching Ideas

Comparison

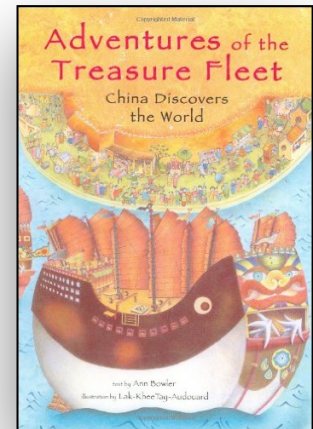
Using a Venn diagram, students can prepare a chart comparing how this Cinderella story is the same as, and different from, the European version. It is your decision whether to read them a picture book, or count on their knowledge of the Disney version.

A simple method is to ask students to first write a rather pedestrian opening sentence such as: *This is a comparison of the classic European Cinderella with the **Yeh-Shen** version.* Then they choose and write about at least three ways in which they are similar. Begin with the best idea for a comparison, end with the second best, put others between. Next they write about at least three ways in which they are different. They follow the same process of beginning with their best idea, ending with the second best, and putting the others between. They conclude by stating whether the two stories are more similar or more different. At this point, they re-write the opening sentence to be more dramatic and interesting, and also write a conclusion that has pizzazz. (*From analyzing the similarities and differences between the story of Yeh-Shen and Cinderella we may conclude that the tale began in China.*) Voila! It may not be amazing, but it is serviceable and can be used for a "decent" B mark throughout their student life.

The Origin of Cinderella

The origin of the Cinderella story seems to be Chinese. It is recorded between 618-907 CE, in **The Miscellaneous Record of Yu Young**. A version of it is included in the front page of the book. It seems that this particular fairy tale travelled along the Silk Road from Asia to Europe, because the oldest European tale is an Italian one in 1640 CE. (We might have guessed by the fact that only Cinderella could fit the tiny slippers, because of the foot binding process of China).

This could be a good story to introduce the concept of the Silk Road for trade between Europe, the Middle East, South East Asia, and China. It fits well with the study of Explorers seeking an alternate route, and even perhaps with the Treasure Fleet launched by the Chinese to encourage trade by sea in the early 1400's AD. **Adventures of the Treasure Fleet** is a good picture telling this amazing story, which few in the Western World knew was even happening in the same century as Columbus, with far more success. Find out why, how, where, and why it stopped.



Extreme Writing Topics

Always present three possible topics for extreme writing so that students will have a choice. My book, **The Power of Extreme Writing**, is available from ASCD for a complete explanation of this unique approach to journaling.

1. Stories of times that I really wanted something.
2. Stories of the best outfits or costumes I have ever owned.
3. Stories of going to a party.



Wearing Parts of Animals

Yen-Shen wears a cloak of kingfisher feathers. There are three motives for wearing clothing: protection, modesty, and decoration. There is a long human tradition of wearing parts of animals to be beautiful. Often, they are a display of rank or wealth. This could be an interesting mini research project and discussion with students, as these practices have led to the near extinction of many animals and birds.

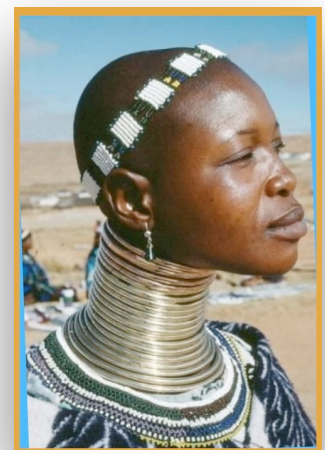
1. Beaver hats (from Canada)
2. Peacock feathers, and other bird feathers in hats (and in this book, a cloak)
3. Mink coats (and other furs including lynx, ocelot, tiger, rabbit, fox, raccoon, chinchilla)
4. Baby seal fur (from Canada)
5. Snake skin (usually handbags, belts, or shoes) (also crocodile)
6. Sharkskin (wallets, belts, purses)
7. Crocodile (handbags, belts, shoes)
8. Coral jewelry
9. Elephant tusks (for jewelry)
10. Buffalo hides (coats)

Bones on “the dung heap”

The bones of Yen-shen's fish are retrieved from the dung heap. What's a dung heap? A pile of “doo doo” as they say. It's only for human or animal waste...not recycling food as in composting.

Mutilating the Body

Another mini-research project topic could be customs that involve altering the body to create “beauty”, such as the custom of foot-binding in China. Customs such as foot binding actually



distort the body to such an extent that it can even be crippling. A discussion with students, about potentially not making any changes to their body that cannot be reversed would be fruitful. Particularly that fashion should be worn...not be part of your body...because what is in fashion now will be ridiculous when you are older. (Imagine full body tattoos on someone who is 80 and wrinkled, for example.)

1. Tattoos
2. Nose rings
3. Extending the ears (Inca, Tutankhamen, Africa, etc.)
4. Tiny feet (China)
5. Elongated necks (some African tribes where if the rings are removed the person suffocates).
6. Teeth blackening (in Elizabeth I court she had eaten so much sugar that her teeth were black, so some women as a fashion statement blackened their teeth)
7. Cranial binding (the head to create a shape. Very common in Incas)
8. Facial Scarring (Sudan, Papua New Guinea, Aboriginal tribes in Australia, Karo people of Ethiopia)
9. Teeth sharpening (Mayan, Vietnamese, Balinese, Africa)
10. Lip plates (Equador, Sudan, Ethiopia, Central America)

CBS Storybreak: Yeh-Shen

CBC Storybreak has a really quite nice fully animated version of Yeh-Shen based on the book, but with more elaborated characters.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ou0Wy4ucjs>

Foot Binding

Foot binding in China is thought to have started in the Tang Dynasty when Emperor Li Yu created a six-foot tall golden lotus decorated with precious stones and pearls, and asked his concubine Yao Niang to bind her feet in white silk into the shape of the crescent moon, and perform a dance ballet-like on the points of her feet on the lotus. Yao Niang's dance was said to be so graceful that others sought to imitate her.

Foot binding became popular as a means of displaying status (women from wealthy families, who did not need their feet to work, could afford to have them bound) and “lotus feet” became a symbol of beauty in Chinese culture. After 1920 it was banned by the Chinese communist government.

