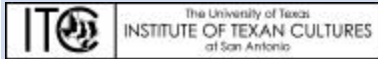


September 2002
Volume 1, Number 1

Prepared for 4th–8th grade Social Studies
teachers and their students by



From the Editor:

Thanks for meeting us at the Crossroads of Culture!

This newsletter contains primary and secondary humanities source materials and TEKS-related activities for middle grades (4th–8th) Social Studies classes. You may use them independently or with a team to integrate the topic with other disciplines such as literature and language, science, mathematics, and the arts. Each of three issues per year (September, December, and March) will include content and activities related to a theme such as this issue's folklore topic, "Haunting Legends and Cucuis." Further background, additional activities, student worksheets, TEKS guidance, and more resources are posted on our Web site in Portable Document File (.pdf) format for easy printing.

Use this issue to lead students to discover the legendary stories of their own community and to learn about the geographic and historical settings of that folklore. Read aloud an African-American ghost story collected by noted folklorist and Goliad native Dr. J. Mason Brewer. For greater clarity about how ghost stories fit into students' lives, consider our lead article by Texas folklorist Dr. John L. Davis. Visit our Web site for legendary creatures in art, a Ghost Writer's Glossary, a "Haunting Legends" rubric, local legends to read and hear, and a bibliography of ghost folklore in South Texas. Schedule an ITC visit to see the intimate exhibit *Los Cucuis: Hispanic Folklore of South Texas* while availing your class of our interesting exhibits and our Back 40.

Then e-mail me and tell me how to do this better next time!
—Mary Grace

Mary Grace Ketner, Editor
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Did you know...

...that in Asian lands, ghost stories are told in the summer?

Why?

Because they really do give you the chills! X

Crossroads of Culture

www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads X

This issue: Haunting Legends & Cucuis

TEXAS GHOST STORIES

by John L. Davis, Ph.D.
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Ghost stories...we've all heard them. Some of us even tell them. They are a part of childhood, maturity, and old age. Stories of ghosts and supernatural events, monsters and "haunts" abound—they're everywhere.

Most are told for enjoyment or a thrill, particularly those told around a campfire. As an old moon tangles in the trees, it's hard to believe what we heard was "only a story." Or was it? Some are repeated as genuine cautionary tales, stories intended to teach something. A place to avoid, perhaps. Some contain advice for the listener about what might be a new experience. A few really scare. Many are plain jokes. People just can't resist the excitement of an encounter with the spooky...but better to only hear about it.

Ghost stories are often repeated at a particular place or within a certain family. These can become "local legends" just like any other kind of story.

But where do they come from?

Ghost stories usually have the qualities of folktales. They start from someone's experience—real or not makes no difference—and other people repeat the story. And repetition means change.

Some have more "literary" origins. These days, young kids adapt and tell hair-raising

things they've seen on television or at the movies...in addition to what they might hear from grandparents. Some parents, momentarily convinced that ghost stories are somehow dangerous or at least a bad influence, don't pass on the stories. They are traded among the young, anyhow. Thus, ghost stories—particularly the home-grown variety—can be found in most families, any community, and, if not in one's own home, just down the block.

The bulk of the ghost stories are told by children. But many an older adult knows several. Some grandparents, newspaper writers, and barbers know quite a few. And today, telling ghost stories is always a part of storytelling gatherings, school programs, and community celebrations.

Ghost stories, rather obviously, are a natural part of life and can teach the difference between fantasy and actuality. However, the border between what may be believed and what can be proven is not the same for all people: it's not a line—it's a rather fuzzy boundary. And that's one thing that makes ghost stories interesting—usually fun to hear, always interesting to collect.

(Continued on page 5)

Collecting Folklore about Ghosts and Cucuis in Your Community

A TEKS-based Class Activity*

(Total class time: 3 to 5 hours.)

Help your students enjoy and appreciate the legends and folktales they hear in their own community.

(Schedule times according to student age and content needs for Social Studies alone or for Social Studies and Language Arts together.)

Teacher Prep:

- Gather up any known print versions of local ghost legends or ghost sites. Your librarian can help locate county history books, vertical files with newspaper clippings, and other likely sources.
- Find or make a city or county map large enough for the class to see and use.
- Open the *Crossroads of Culture* Web pages at www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads. For each team of students, print six copies of the “Haunting Legends” Student Interview form (or print one master copy and duplicate as needed).

Day 1:

1. Read aloud the J. Mason Brewer story, “The Saturday Night Fiddler” (reading time 5½ minutes). Read it “for fun” in your best storytelling style, knowing it will serve as a model and inspiration for student work.
2. **Class Activity** (20 minutes): Say “This story about a watchful dog ghost was told by people who lived in Texas cotton country along the Red River. What kind of stories do people in (your town or region) tell?” Generate a list of local haunting folklore: buildings or landforms where strange things are said to happen, cucuis or bogeymen, things that begin with “they say...” (Slow start? Glimpse the “Haunting Tales from Our Region” page on our Web site.)
3. **Team Activity** (20 minutes of class time plus fieldwork): Divide into research teams of two or three. Teams each select one local legend from the class list to investigate. (It is okay if two teams select the same story.) Use the “Haunting Legends” interview form to interview six people, dividing the interviews equally among the team or going together to interview. At least two informants should be adults; Internet and print sources may substitute for no more than two informants. (Allow several days or a weekend for fieldwork.)

Day 2:

1. **Team Activity** (30-60 minutes): (Distribute the Ghost Writer's Glossary and the “Haunting Legends” rubric

from the Web site as desired.) Teams review with each other their “Haunting Legends” interviews, complete the writing assignment, and turn in their research report.

2. **Teacher Activity:** Collect the reports. After using the “Haunting Legends” rubric on the Web site or your own grading system, sort reports by subject, grouping stories about the same legend together. (Make photocopies if you are working with several classes.) Include in each group any published versions you were able to find. Bring a large town or county map.

Day 3:

Group Activity (20 minutes for spontaneous report; 60 minutes for prepared performance)

1. Divide into storytelling circles of five students. Have each circle read aloud all reports.
Teacher: As students read in their groups, write these discussion questions on the blackboard:
 - What features did all versions include?
 - What unique items were in some of the versions?
 - Were there “facts” in one story which were in conflict with “facts” from another? (Example: one says white dress; another says black.)
2. Have each group retell the story to each other considering the questions on the blackboard. Decide upon a way to tell it to the class (appoint a narrator, divide up the story, act it out, script out a reader's theater...). Be able to locate your story on the map and point out any photographs or drawings you may have.

Class Activity: (40 minutes; this will be on Day 4 for those who chose the longer discussion/preparation time). Tell and listen to each other's legends.

Discussion and Closure: (20-30 minutes)

1. Ask “What kinds of things have you heard people say they believe in or don't believe in?” (Ghosts, God, the scientific method, love at first sight, liberty and justice for all, you.) List student responses.
2. The stories you have gathered and told are folktales, tales folks tell. Folks in Ireland tell tales about leprechauns; folks in Norway tell tales about trolls; folks in Texas tell tales about chupacabras and the headless horseman and dog ghosts. We all tell each other's stories, too. Do we “believe in” them? Discuss.
3. Texas folklorist Dr. John Davis says that the stories a community tells are like a mirror; what do our stories reflect about our community? (That we like to be frightened and to frighten each other; that we like a good laugh; that we are willing to look at our past and learn from it; that we are imaginative; ...)

Dr. J. Mason Brewer: A Texas Folktale Collector

From the 1930s to the 1970s, African-American Texan Dr. J. Mason Brewer collected stories in black communities in Texas and other states. A folklorist, professor, and writer, Brewer contended that African-American culture is doubly rich because of its dual roots: African and European. While trickster tales, for example (such as Br'er Rabbit stories), have African antecedents, other black folktales, such as those with animal ghosts, derive from the oral traditions of the white Irish, English, and Scottish Americans with whom the Africans lived in the American South.

Unlike the mean-spirited or evil spooks of some stories, dog ghosts were the spirits of deceased loved ones returning to help in a unique way. Originally recorded in a rural black dialect, this version of one of Dr. Brewer's stories has been retold for you in standard English.

The Saturday Night Fiddler

During cotton-picking time in the Red River Bottoms, Saturday was the day that the cotton-pickers did not go to bed with the chickens. Instead, they built themselves a plank platform on the farm where they were picking cotton and had themselves a real break-down ball that lasted slap-bang up to the time the roosters start to crow on Sunday morning.

The farmers couldn't hold the cotton-pickers down, either, or keep them from dancing away all night long. They had a saying in the Bottoms back then that if a white man could be black for just one Saturday night, he never would want to be a white man again!

They always had a fiddle player to play the music for them, and they don't do him no dirt about paying him either! The fiddler could count on getting about twenty dollars for the night, more than a schoolteacher made in a couple of weeks. As a consequence, the news got around about the fast money fiddle players made in the Red River Bottoms on a Saturday night, so fiddlers from every-which-and-where made their way there on Saturday nights. Occasionally, a fiddler would even make his way from down in Louisiana to play for these fling-dings.

Once, a Louisiana fiddler was way late getting off from Shreveport and didn't land in the Bottoms till pitch dark. The reason it was way past dark when he reached the Bottoms was that he brought his little brother with him. Their mama had just died, and the fiddler was the only living relative the little boy had, so the boy had to tag along wherever he could latch onto a job.

The fiddler worried a whole heap about getting to the Bottoms so late, since he had an extra mouth to feed now. His pocket change was real low, and he didn't know if he was going to get a job playing for a platform dance that night. He hadn't even started bird-dogging for one to play for. His little brother's feet were so sore, and his legs so aching, and his tongue was hanging out of his mouth like a dog running a rabbit, and the fiddler didn't want to make the little boy walk another-further. He looked at his little brother real pitiful-like, because he knew how bad the little fellow was faring. But where was he going to leave the boy while he looked for a place to play his fiddle? That was the question that was pestering him.

Just then, he looked up and saw a white man jogging along the road on a saddle horse, and he stopped him and asked him if he knew where the cotton-pickers were having their dance that Saturday night and if he knew of a place where he could leave his little brother while he went looking for it.

The white man told him that they were having a big dance down the road a piece on the right-hand side, and he said there was an old cottonseed house right there, to the left of where they were standing, where he could leave his little brother.

The fiddler thanked the white man, then took a box of matches out of his pocket, lit one, and looked across the barbed wire fence. Sure enough, there was the cottonseed house. He was tickled to death about finding a place for his little brother. He was mighty hard to crowd as a fiddler, and he knew that he would have no trouble landing a job if he could get to the dance.

So he took his brother in one hand, his fiddle in the other, and climbed through the barbed wire fence. There was a ladder leading to a window on one side, so he climbed up the ladder and carried the little boy through the window. He spread out a blanket and gave his brother a paper sack with some cheese and crackers and ginger snaps in it to eat if he got hungry. Then he took his fiddle, said "so long," and struck out down the road to find the spot where they were having the dance.

The cottonseed was piled so high that the little boy barely had room to stretch himself out, but finally he managed somehow to get himself fixed so that he could rest his tired limbs. His big brother hadn't been gone more than a couple of minutes when he heard a puffing noise, and when he raised his head up to see what it was, what do you reckon he saw? Smoke coming through the window of the little cottonseed house!

The little boy was so scared he pulled the blanket over his face and started trembling like a leaf. He lay there for quite a spell until finally he got up enough courage to peek out from under the cover, and what do you reckon he saw this time? A great big white dog standing up at the foot of his pallet looking down at him! The little boy was so scared he couldn't even holler—he just lay there wondering if the dog was going to bite him and tear him to pieces, but the dog didn't budge from where it was standing. It just stood there and looked down at the little boy without making a sound.

Finally, the little boy saw that the dog wasn't acting like it was going to bite him, so he dozed off to sleep. When he woke up, it was about five o'clock in the morning, and the dog was still standing over him just like before. Pretty soon, he heard his brother coming down the road playing his fiddle, and just before his brother reached the cottonseed house, the dog turned into smoke again and went back out the window—the same way he came in.

When the fiddler got there, his little brother told him what had happened, and the fiddler allowed as how that dog was their mother, come back from the grave to keep a watch over the little fellow while he was alone and his brother was out fiddling for the cotton-pickers' dance.

(This version is a derivative of "The Saturday Night Fiddler" as found in Dog Ghosts and Other Texas Negro Folk Tales by J. Mason Brewer, University of Texas Press. © 1958, renewed 1986. Retold and printed with permission.)

Expansion Activity: (20-30 minutes) In groups of three to six, do a mindmap/brainstorm activity. Write the word FOLKLORE in the middle of a large sheet of newsprint for each group. Using markers or map colors, have students map out concepts about folklore, sparking from each other's ideas. Hang the sheets around the room and allow each group to report on their explorations. Close by doing a recap of recurring concepts to illustrate that our folklore surrounds us and influences us throughout our lives.

Consider submitting stories, photographs, and drawings from this project for an October feature for your local newspaper. Call the editor early to see if s/he is interested, what kinds of materials and formats would be most appropriate, and how you can best serve as intermediary between student work and professional editor. Also submit thumbnail versions of your stories to *Lone Star Spirits* (link from *Crossroads* Web site).

***TEKS:** This activity offers practice in and development of the following types of skills for each grade level:

- Differentiate between primary and secondary sources; analyze, organize, and interpret information; identify different points of view; identify elements of frame of reference influencing events; use mathematical skills to interpret maps and graphs.
- Use correct Social Studies terminology; incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication; express ideas orally; create written and visual materials; use standard grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation.
- Identify problems and situations requiring decisions, gather information, consider options, predict consequences, take action, and evaluate solutions/decisions independently and in groups.

Teachers: *Specific TEKS applications and planning aids for your grade level are at www.texancultures.utsa.edu X*



Rock building in Dubina, a ghost town in Fayette County, Texas (ITC 73-974)

A GHOST TOWN is not a town filled with ghosts, but simply a town which is no longer “alive.” A few people might still live there or have pastures and fields nearby, but the livelihood of the townspeople has disappeared. A storm may have destroyed their crops, or a new industry in a neighboring town may have attracted residents to better jobs.

The immigrants who settled Dubina, “Oak Grove” in their native Czech, were farmers who worked hard and prospered, but when the railroad bypassed their community in 1873, they had to take their business to Weimar or Schulenburg. A hurricane in 1909 and a destructive fire in 1912 proved fatal blows to a weakened economy.

Discuss: Is there a “ghost town” near you? What economic factor(s) contributed to the town's formation and growth? What natural or historical event(s) contributed to its demise? X

Cucuis:

Xavier Garza, the artist who created the exhibit *Los Cucuis: Hispanic Folklore of South Texas* describes a cucui (coo-COO-ee) as “A fictional, supernatural being, monster, or ghost that is often used in stories. The term cucui is primarily used in Mexican and Hispanic cultures.” The English term, “bogeyman” (or “boogie-man”), carries a similar meaning to English-speaking people.



El Mal de Ojo: The Evil Eye

Question:

Why do you think that otherwise loving adults might tell innocent children about such strange and fearsome stories?



Listen to stories of
Texas Ghosts and Cucuis!

The eight stories on this audiotape, an Indie Award nominee, were heard in recent years at the Texas Folklife Festival, the Institute's annual summertime event celebrating the flavors and folkways of the people of Texas.

★**Donna Ingham** of Spicewood tells Brit Bailey's tale, the story behind the ghost lights of Bailey's Prairie in Brazoria County. ★**Doc Moore** of Canyon Lake delivers a terrifying tale of one young girl's

encounter with a lechusa in Pleasanton. ★**Sheila Starks Phillips** of Sugarland details an urban legend that will make you question whether or not to ever accept a babysitting job again. ★**De Cee Cornish** of Fort Worth raises the haunting specter of scuttled slaves left to die in the Brazos River. ★**Eldrena Douma** of Canyon recalls a fearful moment from her childhood on the reservation. ★**Tim Tingle** of Canyon Lake tells about Julie, the Kingsville Prom Queen: she just wanted one more dance, they said. ★**Mary Grace Ketner** of San Antonio relates the legend of the Borderland's best-known apparition, La Llorona. ★**Mark Babino** of San Antonio recalls being visited by "the Sleep of Death" during his childhood in a Beaumont Creole neighborhood. *The tape may be ordered by phone (\$10) at 1-800-776-7651.*

Crossroads of Culture is distributed three times each school year (in September, December, and March) by the Institute of Texan Cultures.

The Institute of Texan Cultures, one of the three campuses of the University of Texas at San Antonio, is an educational center concerned with the history and diverse cultures of Texas. Located at the corner of Bowie and Durango in HemisFair Park in downtown San Antonio, the Institute has easy access from I-10, I-281, and I-35. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesdays through Sundays. Closed Mondays, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the week of Texas Folklife Festival except during Festival hours.

Two school tours are available and may be scheduled for the same trip or separately: (1) a docent-led tour of our Exhibit Floor and the Dome Show, *Faces and Places of Texas*, and (2) Back 40 tours demonstrating pioneer life in replicated 19th century structures. Each tour is \$1 per student, one adult free per every 10 students; call (210) 458-2291 to reserve a tour for 9:00, 10:45, 12:15, or 2:30. Unscheduled school groups admitted space permitting; no tour guide provided.

Open patio and covered areas are available for students to eat their lunches. Bus parking available on-site. For driving directions, programs, Texas Folklife Festival information, teacher resources, student activities, and regular admission rates, go to www.texancultures.utsa.edu.

Crossroads on the net:

www.texancultures.utsa.edu/crossroads

- 📖 A printable copy of this issue
- 📖 TEKS applications for each grade level, 4–8
- 📖 Student Interview form to help you find your community's "Haunting Legends"
- 📖 A "Haunting Legends" rubric
- 📖 Photographs from the *Cucuis* exhibit, Xavier Garza's playful story art boxes and tabloid pieces
- 📖 Local legends to read and hear
- 📖 A Ghost Writer's Glossary
- 📖 An annotated bibliography of South Texas haunting legends and ghost folklore collections
- 📖 Link to our *Spirits of the Alamo* site

(Continued from page 1)

They can be collected just about anywhere (if people will talk) and are a form of local history as important as oral interviews, family photos, and most of the local stuff we see on the news these days. They are one of the many types of stories told in the world, which include fairy tales, Jack tales, urban legends, fables, and myths.

And ghost stories contain a lot beyond the story itself.

For one thing, do ghost stories mean that ghosts are real? Certainly not...the stories don't prove a thing except that the stories themselves exist. Ghosts aren't scientifically provable—in spite of television documentaries—and whether one believes in ghosts or not depends on personal opinion. A person fooled or tricked into thinking a ghost just walked past may believe in ghosts from then on. And a real skeptic may choose not to believe in what might really lurk in that dark closet down the hall.

For sure, ghost stories contain a lot of history. Like most legends, they can originate in local events. They say a lot about the people who tell them and believe them and disbelieve them and enjoy them and those who are scared or amused. Like all stories, they are mirrors. Usually, the more a person really believes in ghosts (and having nothing to do with hearing the stories), the more the stories can actually frighten...or comfort.

Most ghosts in stories aren't out to hurt anyone. They are considered (by those who believe) to be around because of unfinished business, or an unexpected death, or to ask a favor of the living. Some simply wander.

Only a few stories contain vengeful ghosts who lure the living to ghastly fates, who terrify those who approach their lairs, and who penetrate the minds of people with fear that freezes thought itself. So some say.

Collecting stories, comparing versions, investigating origins, and talking about them with others usually turns a person a bit more skeptical. Taking a close look at ghost stories in the clear light of day is a good way of thinking about such critical human experiences as belief, creativity, judgment, and communication.

The stories will still be fun at midnight. X

Institute of Texan Cultures

Selected Events for Fall 2002

Saturday, September 14, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Exhibit Floor. Open House & Warehouse Clearance Sale for Educators.

Through September 29: Special Exhibit. *Fantasy Images: The Nature of Holography, Trompe l'Oeil, and Trick Photography.* Learn the history, development, and special nature of holography while viewing some 40 holograms of natural and wildlife images. Includes 20-minute video explaining how holograms are made. A small display of trompe l'oeil and an exhibit of trick photography expand the theme of Fantasy Images.

September 17-November 10. Special Exhibit. *Los Cucuis: Hispanic Folklore of South Texas.* The infamous bogeyman comes to life with the help of Hispanic folklore artist and storyteller Xavier Garza. La Llorona, el Diablo en el Baile, los Train Tracks, and others are featured in diorama-like assemblages and tabloid front pages. Free and open to the public.

Sunday, October 13, noon-5 p.m. Pioneer Sunday. Come as a family and enjoy a hands-on day of pioneer life in Texas through interactive activities. Experience how 19th century Texans did laundry, made rope, played games, pieced quilts, accomplished daily tasks with tools and mechanical devices, and made music and story. Included with regular admission.

Saturday, October 19, 8 a.m.-noon. History Fair Workshop and Orientation. UTSA Downtown Campus. Sponsored by UTSA, the San Antonio Regional History Fair Committee, and the Institute of Texan Cultures, this free workshop will provide information on History Fair registration and tips for winning papers, exhibits, documentaries, and performances.

Friday, October 25, 7:30 p.m. "Ghosts and Cucuis: An Evening of Storytelling." Storytellers from the San Antonio Storytellers Association take the stage to share their most haunting tales for the scary story season.

October 22-November 10. Ofrenda del Día de los Muertos. This year's ofrenda recognizes and celebrates the life of "Bongo Joe," a San Antonio musician and street artist.

October 22-November 8. "El Día de los Muertos," This 10-minute puppet show tells the story of this unique borderlands holiday for elementary students during morning tours on Tuesdays through Fridays.

Sunday, November 3. Czech Heritage Day, celebrating the renovation of the Czech Texans Exhibit.

November 19-February 23. Special Exhibit. *Photographs and Paragraphs: The Images of I.N. Hall and the Imagery of O. Henry.* See how the picturesque language of a great American writer is reflected visually in the work of this Canadian immigrant photographer. Both artists lived and worked in Cotulla in the 1880s-1900s.

Sunday, December 8, 4-7 p.m. Holiday Traditions. In collaboration with the McNay Museum of Art, the Institute of Texan Cultures invites you to join in the festive and sacred seasonal celebrations observed by people all around the world.

To learn more about these exhibits and events, call (210) 458-2300. To schedule a school tour of ITC's permanent and special exhibits and/or the Back 40, call (210) 458-2291.



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