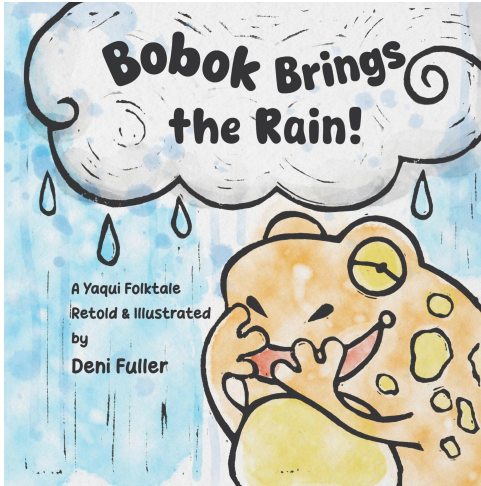


The Journey of Bobok: A Yaqui Folktale of Bravery



Lesson Overview

- **Target Age:** Grades K–1 (5–7 years)
- **Objective:** Students will identify the characteristics of a folktale, explore the cultural history of the Yaqui (Yoeme) people, and discuss how the character Bobok demonstrates perseverance.
- **Key Themes:** Perseverance (not giving up), Folktales (stories that explain nature), and Indigenous Heritage.

Materials Needed

- **The book:** *Bobok Brings the Rain!* by Deni Fuller.
- **Map:** A simple map showing the Sonoran Desert (Arizona/Mexico).
- **“Character Comparison” Chart:** A whiteboard or large paper to compare Sparrow, Swallow, and Bobok.
- **Art Supplies:** Have students draw Bobok wearing his magical bat wings. Ask them to depict wind and rain in their drawings.

1. Introduction: What is a Folktale?

- **Cultural Greeting:** Open with the traditional Yaqui greeting: *“Lios em chania”* (lee-os em chah-nee-ah).
- **Defining the Genre:** Explain that a **Folktale** is a story passed down for a long time that often explains *how* or *why* things happen in nature. Ask: *“In this story, we are going to learn why the toads in the desert sing when it rains. Do you think a toad can really fly with bat wings, or is that the ‘magic’ of a folktale?”*
- **The Setting:** Show the Sonoran Desert on a map. Explain that for the Yaqui people, water is a precious gift because the desert is very dry.

Habitat Map of the Sonoran Desert Toad



The Real Bobok



© Gary Nafis

Shutterstock

2. The Story: Reading for Perseverance

- **The "Rule of Three":** As you read, point out that three different animals try to help the village.
 - **Sparrow:** Got scared by the "BOOM!" of the storm.
 - **Swallow:** Got dizzy from the "WHOOSH!" of the wind.
 - **Bobok:** What did Bobok do differently?
- **Critical Thinking Question:** Pause on Page 6. Bobok says, *"I'll GO! But first, I need a good night's rest."* Ask the students: *"Why was it smart for Bobok to rest and visit a friend (Great Turtle) before starting his journey?"* * **Interactive Soundscape:** Every time Bobok sings "Ribbit! Ribbit!" have the students join in to "call the rain" with him.

3. Activity: Bobok's Brave Path (Story Mapping)

- **The Character Chart:** On the board, draw three columns. Work with the students to describe each messenger:

Sparrow	Swallow	Bobok
Fast, but easily frightened	Swift, but got lost in the wind	Can't fly and small, but prepared and brave .

- **Art/Writing Connection:** Have students draw Bobok wearing his magical bat wings. Ask them to write (or dictate) one word that describes Bobok (e.g., Brave, Helpful, Resourceful, Strong).

4. Cultural & Science Connection: Why the Toad?

- **Biology Meets Myth:** Explain the real science behind the story. Sonoran Desert toads live underground to stay cool. They only come out when they hear the vibration of thunder and the feel of rain.
- **The Yaqui Legacy:** Tell the students that for hundreds of years, the Yaqui people have watched the toads come out during the "monsoon" (rainy season). Because the toads appear exactly when the water arrives, the Yaqui people see Bobok as a hero who brings life back to the desert.

5. Closing: "Tu'i aniat"

- **Reflection:** Ask the students: *"Is there a time you felt unsure like Bobok, but you asked for help and finished the task on your own?"*
- **Language Guide:** Explain that in the Yaqui language, there isn't just one word for "goodbye." Instead, they use a phrase that means "Walk the Good Path/May love follow you" all at once.
- **Closing Greetings:** End the lesson by saying **"Tu'i aniat" (too-ee-AH-nee-aht)** so that love will follow everyone.

Native American Folklore

Since ancient times Yaqui people have worshipped the toad named Bobok believing that the toad holds the power to bring the rain. Rain represents renewal, the rebirth of life to the desert they inhabit. Bobok represents a spiritual, helper figure within the traditional narratives that explain the natural world and the cultural history of the Yaqui people in Sonora, Mexico.

Every year desert monsoons bring the toads from their underworld hibernation to the earth's surface to feed and breed in the temporary pools created by these hard rains, before returning to the comfort of their underground world for another year. In one renewal ceremony, some Yaqui men will sing to Bobok and dance to celebrate life's renewal, the coming of the rain.

Yaqui people tell the story of how Bobok the Toad saved the world. They say that long ago the Yaqui people were suffering through a terrible drought. Water holes dried up, so did old wells and crops shriveled up and died.

To break this drought Yaqui elders sent Bobok to speak to Yuku, the spirit of rain who lived in the Sky World. Bobok borrowed a set of bat wings to make the journey. Bobok was successful and convinced Yuku to send rain down to the Yaqui people.

As long as Bobok continued to sing (croak) the rain would continue to fall, if he stopped so would the rain. Singing all the way down, Bobok made it safely to the Yaqui lands and so did the rain.

Since that time the toads have multiplied, and whenever they sing, the rain comes looking for the toads to bless the earth with water.

Source: <https://libertywildlife.org/ambassador/desis/>

Lesson plan created by Deni Fuller 2/2026 based on "Bobok Brings the Rain!"[©]