

UNIT PLAN BRAINSTORM



Witchy Ways (English Language Arts, History, Theater)

Does your class know the legend of Baba Yaga? She's one of the most famous witches in the world, and her story has been adapted over 400 times! As a group, take some time to learn about this famous character and introduce your students to her iconic lore. First, read aloud a version of Baba Yaga to your class at storytime (if you can't find one, you can access the University of Cambridge's version of [Baba Yaga and Visilia the Brave](#)). While you read, ask your students to act out and embody the characters, including Baba Yaga! Explain that Baba Yaga has been portrayed many different ways in many different adaptations. Share some of the history of the Slavic character, explaining her Russian origins and where she—and characters inspired by her—shows up in contemporary culture. After you read one version of the tale, see if you can find another adaptation to explore. Finally, have students create their own versions of Baba Yaga! Ask them to take inspiration from the two versions of her story you've explored together and sketch out what their version of this famed witch looks like on a blank piece of paper. Then, have them physicalize her with their own mannerisms and magical powers. Finally, put on a Baba Yaga parade for another class, complete with costumes and music, bringing the folktale to life in your classroom!

To support this unit, use the [A Study in Character Exploration Activity](#) in the Discover and Create section.

Stories that Pop! (English Language Arts, Visual Arts)

Have you ever loved a story so much that you wish it could pop straight out of the page? Now it can! Work with your students to design their own pop-up books. For a visual example, check out this [Bringing a Pop-Up Book to Life](#) video on Youtube! First, have all of your students choose their favorite fairy tale or story, or choose one you've read aloud during storytime. Next, provide empty notebooks for each student or staple blank pages together to form booklets. On each page, invite students to write down a line or section from the story at the bottom of the page, making sure that their story has a beginning, middle and end. Next, draw scenes, characters and places to go along with this text on a separate piece of heavy construction paper. Feel free to utilize markers, stickers or printed-out photographs. Then, cut out these drawings carefully and fold them in half. Tape or glue the bottom half directly into their booklets, so the top half stands upright when the page is open. Carefully close the booklet, allowing the 3D illustrations to fold neatly in between the pages. *Voilà!* Each student now has their very own pop-up book! Take turns having each student read aloud from their pop-up book or facilitate a pop-up book swap, so everyone can see each others' art and learn some new stories!

To support this unit, use the [My Magical Mythical Map Creativity Page](#) in the Discover and Create section.

A Few of Our Favorite Things (English Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts)

A picture is worth a thousand words, and sometimes, so is an object! Focus on the grounding energy and personal storytelling that comes from objects in your students' lives. First, have your class think of an object in their life that means something special to them—a gift from a friend, a homemade toy or a charm that lives in their backpack. Ask them to bring their objects into class for a show-and-tell! At the show-and-tell, ask each student why they picked their object, what meaning it has to them and a memory that they associate with it. Afterwards, invite students to take time to draw a picture or write a story about their object—complete with vibrant color and whimsy. When they've finished, hang all of the class's drawings up together on the wall to create a mural that tells the stories of your classroom's most favorite things. Tell your students that their mural can be a source of inspiration for them throughout the year, reminding them of the things that bring them joy!

To support this unit, use the [The Hopeful Firebird Activity](#) in the Respond and Connect section.

