



## Yeh – Shen

### A Cinderella Story from China

Yeh-Shen dates to *the Miscellaneous Record of Yu Yang* as it first appeared during the T'ang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) It dates 1,000 years before the oldest European version.

### Yeh-Shen Mirrors the Chinese Culture

Cultural aspects that are found in the story

- Reverence for ancestors
- Symbol of the fish – hope of prosperity
- Acceptance of men as wise in society
- Feet are a beautiful part of a woman's body – small feet beautiful and feminine
- Festivals important part of Chinese culture
- Gold was considered the color for royalty – gold slippers
- Bones of fish filled with the spirit

Comparison with well-known Cinderella version

Story Title	Author	Setting
<i>Yeh-Shen</i>	<b>Retold by</b> Ai – Ling Louie	dim past Southern China
Characters	Hero/Heroine	Villain
Yeh-Shen Stepmother Stepsister Wu Prince Spirit man fish	Yeh-Shen	Stepmother

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Magic by</b>
Stepmother kills her only friend, the fish	Yeh-Shen goes to the festival, loses her slipper which the King finds.  King marries her.  Stepmother and sister are crushed to death in shower of stones.	Fish bones
<b>Cultural Aspects</b>	<b>Cultural Aspects</b>	<b>Words in Spanish</b>
-during the T'ang dynasty  -father had two wives  -importance of the fish  -spring festival  -living in caves  -written in panels like a folding painted screen  -fish illustration on every page	-illustrations in the book  - festival meet the person to marry  -tiny feet	mágico – magic  madrstra – stepmother  hermanastra – stepsister  amigo – friend  ropa fina – fine clothes  zapatilla – slipper  rey – king  pez – fish  pies – feet

<http://www.myseveralworlds.com/2007/08/02/yeh-shen-the>

## Extended Activities

<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/china/literature/cinderella.htm> - several extended activities in a variety of subject areas

Architecture – create a pavilion or pagoda where the king in Yeh-Shen might have lived

[http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304\\_cinderella\\_yehShen.pdf](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304_cinderella_yehShen.pdf)

## Social Studies

Celebrations and Holidays – villagers were invited to a festival. Research the holidays and festivals in China.

[http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304\\_cinderella\\_yehShen.pdf](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304_cinderella_yehShen.pdf)

Chinese culture through Cinderella – complete lesson plan

## Language Arts

Vocabulary activities, comprehension questions, crosswords, quiz

[http://www.abcteach.com/free/b/book\\_yehshe\\_upperelem.pdf](http://www.abcteach.com/free/b/book_yehshe_upperelem.pdf)

Writing - The Chinese write in “characters”. These “characters” represent words. Research the Chinese characters and then invent your own set of characters to write a simple story.

[http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304\\_cinderella\\_yehShen.pdf](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2304/2304_cinderella_yehShen.pdf)

Discussion topics for during / after reading:

- Do you know the story of Cinderella? What is it?
- Discuss the concept of different cultures telling the same story set within their own context.
- If you had a magic fish/ fairy godmother, what would you ask for?

Compare and contrast several versions of Cinderella from several countries

<http://asiasociety.org/education-learning/resources-schools/elementary-lesson-plans/twice-upon-time-multi-cultural-cinderella>

## Culture

Compare the versions of Cinderella from the different cultures. Following are some questions to ask children about the various versions to help them compare culture:

1. What caused [the Cinderella character] to have a lowly position in the family?
2. What shows that [the Cinderella character] has a lowly position in the household?
3. How is [the Cinderella character] related to other household members?
4. What happens to keep [the Cinderella character] away from the ball?
5. How does [the Cinderella character] receive her wishes or transformation?
6. Where does [the Cinderella character] meet the prince?
7. What is the test signifying the rightful [Cinderella character]?
8. What else happens to the stepsisters?"

(Adapted from Donna Norton – *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introduction to Children's Literature*)

## Higher Level Thinking Skills

Venn Diagram – Compare and contrast different cultural versions with Yeh-Shen

<http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Cind.%20%26Yeh%20Shen%20Lesson.html>

Graphic for comparing Yeh-Shen and Cinderella

<http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Cind.%20%26%20Yeh.%20Graph.%20Org.html>

## Art

- Make a mobile with items from the book - magic fish, gold shoe, etc.
- Write a letter from Ya Shen to the magic fish, telling him what has happened to her since the end of the book, and illustrate.