

THE
Storyteller
EVAN TURK

ACTIVITIES
for
Educators
Librarians
Families
Readers

"Teaching youth is like carving in stone."
—Moroccan Proverb

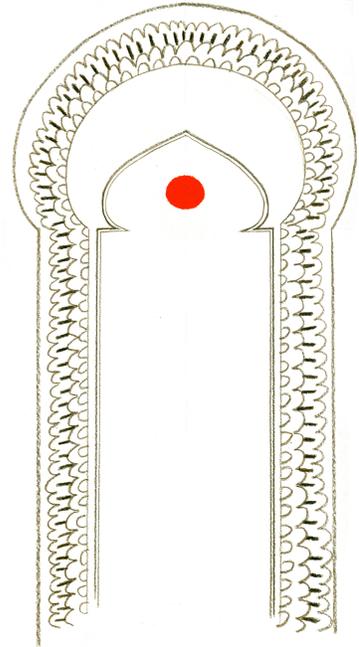
ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES

The tales in **The Storyteller** by Evan Turk pay tribute to the legendary stories told in the public squares of Morocco, and the artwork honors the colors and symbolism of the country's traditional carpets. The following activities play with the themes and images of the book and offer readers deeper exploration. *The activities include:*

AL-GARRAB: Quench Your Thirst: An Origami Activity (Page 4)

Readers are invited to write and draw in the "pool of blue" on this activity sheet as the book is read to them. When they fold the paper according to the origami instructions, readers will hold a cup filled with water, words, and images. This reinforces the book's theme that you can quench your thirst with story!

Use With: Read Aloud, Library Event, Classroom Lessons, Family Exploration



HAJITEK MAJITEK: Moroccan Storyteller Profiles & Discussion Questions (Page 5-8)

This activity includes an essay about a famous Moroccan storyteller and a letter to your readers from an up-and-coming young storyteller. Discussion questions and suggested activities ask readers about the role of storytelling in their lives and how technology may have changed our listening and storytelling.

Use With: Classroom Lessons, Family Exploration

HLAYKIA: Elders as Storytellers: An Interview Activity (Page 9-11)

In Morocco, storytelling is an art form that has passed from generation to generation for over 1000 years. Do our elders have stories to tell us? Using themes from the book, this activity encourages readers to interview elders. An introduction letter and final poster template are included.

Use With: Classroom Lessons, Library Event, Family Exploration

HDITH O MAGHZEL: A Weaving Activity (Page 12)

In traditional Moroccan culture, women weavers told their stories in the patterns of their carpets. Use the creation of cardboard looms to explore color choice, color theory, Moroccan carpets, and the colors and patterns of this book with readers.

Use With: Art Classes, Classroom Lessons, Library Event, Family Exploration

ROSSOMAT: Visual Literacy (Page 13-14)

Like the creator of a Moroccan carpet, Evan Turk has woven meaning into the colors, patterns, and placement of the images in **The Storyteller**. Explore the book's many visual literacy opportunities with art discussion questions.

Use With: Art Classes, Classroom Lessons, Family Exploration

For even more educational opportunities and connections, visit the "Inspiration & Resources" section of **TheStorytellerBook.com**. This page includes an audio pronunciation guide to all the Moroccan Arabic words in the book and activities.

Each activity was created by Curious City (CuriousCityDPW.com) and author-illustrator Evan Turk with the kind consultation of Abdelaziz Rhazzali. Listen for Abdelaziz's voice in the book trailer and the audio pronunciation guide.

STORYTELLER EVENTS

Holding an event for the public? Find an image for your poster or social media announcements on the "Inspiration & Resources" section of **TheStorytellerBook.com**.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Storyteller

By Evan Turk

Published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers

ISBN-13: 9781481435185

Age Range: 6 Years – Adult

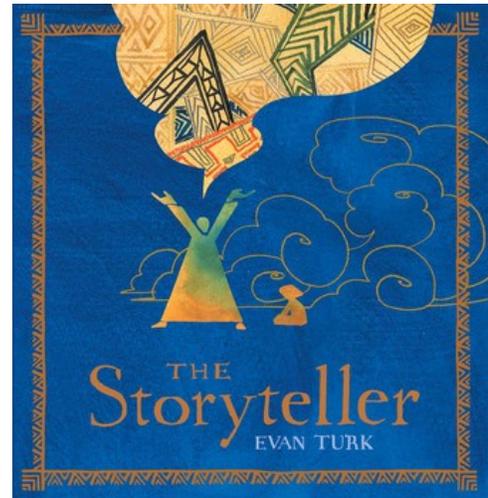
From Ezra Jack Keats 2015 New Illustrator Honor recipient Evan Turk comes his debut work as author-illustrator: an original folktale that celebrates the power of stories and storytelling.

Long, long ago, like a pearl around a grain of sand, the Kingdom of Morocco formed at the edge of the great, dry Sahara. It had fountains of cool, refreshing water to quench the thirst of the desert, and storytellers to bring the people together.

But as the kingdom grew, the people forgot the dangers of the desert, and they forgot about the storytellers, too. All but one young boy, who came to the Great Square for a drink and found something that quenched his thirst even better: wonderful stories. As he listened to the last storyteller recount the Endless Drought and the Glorious Blue Water Bird, he discovered the power of a tale well told.

Acclaimed illustrator Evan Turk has created a stunning multidimensional story within a story that will captivate the imagination and inspire a new generation of young storytellers.

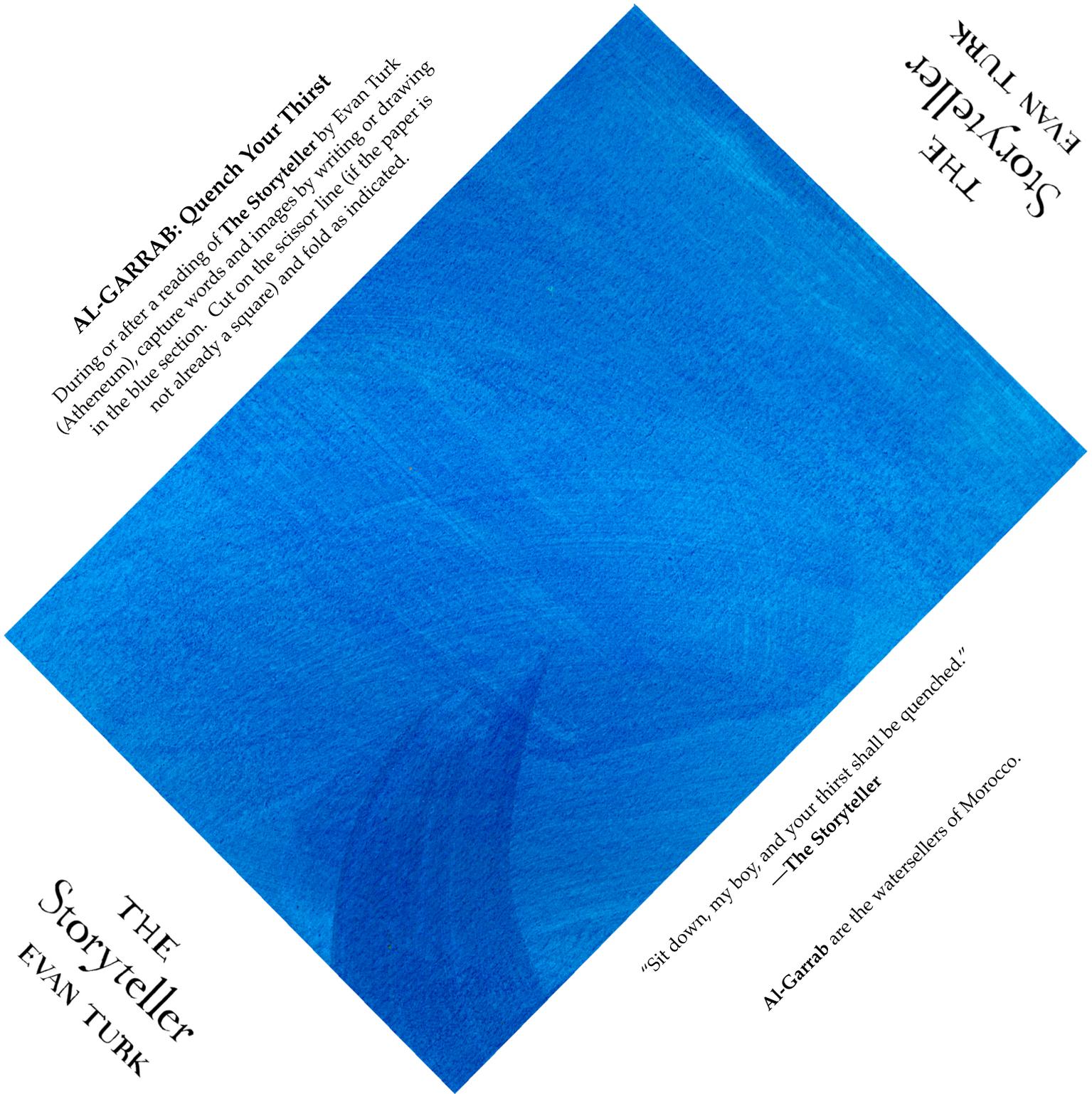
- ★ "This lush and lovely title is highly recommended for its aesthetic qualities as well as its multiple curricular tie-ins." —*School Library Journal*, Starred Review
- ★ "Turk's layered ode to storytelling's magic begs to be shared aloud with a group, though the detailed art merits close inspection." —*Booklist*, Starred Review
- ★ "Original storytelling with the feel of the best folklore, enhanced by illustrations done in a style not seen anyplace else." —*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred Review
- ★ "Fountains of blue pour from the mouths of storytellers, cementing the message that stories, like water, are life sustaining." —*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review



THE
Storyteller
EVAN TURK

AL-GARRAB: Quench Your Thirst

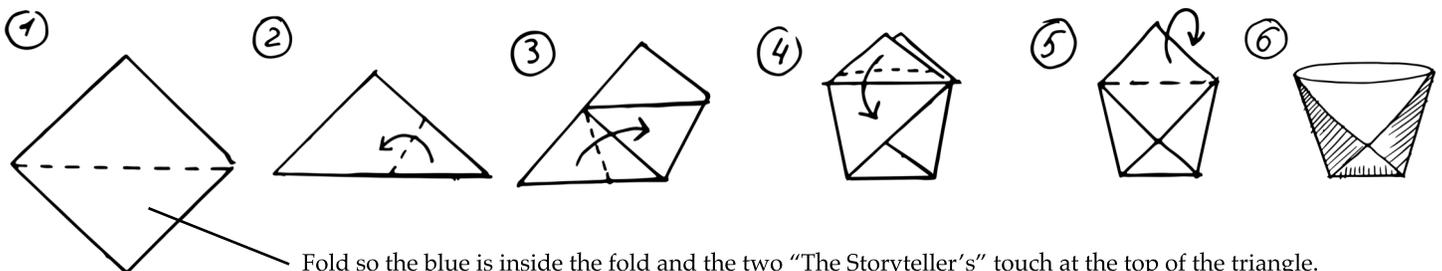
During or after a reading of *The Storyteller* by Evan Turk (Atheneum), capture words and images by writing or drawing in the blue section. Cut on the scissor line (if the paper is not already a square) and fold as indicated.



THE
Storyteller
EVAN TURK

"Sit down, my boy, and your thirst shall be quenched."
—**The Storyteller**

Al-Garrab are the watersellers of Morocco.

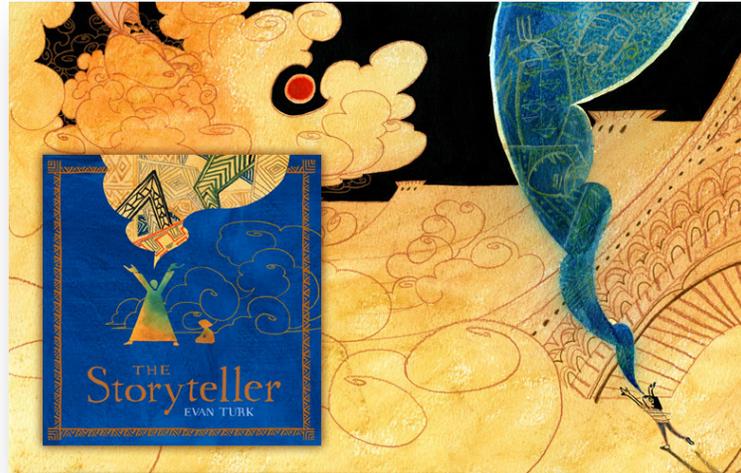


Fold so the blue is inside the fold and the two "The Storyteller's" touch at the top of the triangle.

HAJITEK MAJITEK
Moroccan Storyteller
Profiles & Discussion
Questions

Morocco's public storytellers, or *hlaykia*, have been learning, preserving, and sharing stories for nearly one thousand years.

These stories have been passed down from generation to generation and have become a part of the cultural fabric. The power of these storytellers lies in their audience, or *halka*. With the *hlaykia* in the center, the *halka* forms an expanding circle and is linked with the generations who came before them through the stories.



But these storytellers, like *Ahmed Temiicha*, are disappearing. As audiences drift toward television, movies, and the Internet, there are few for the aging *hlaykia* to pass their stories along to. Only a handful of master storytellers remain. Recently, however, there has been a resurgence of storytelling with the craft and commitment of young storytellers like *Mehdi EL Ghaly*.

“[With storytelling] traditions are revived through us...unconsciously. They are somewhere inside of us and they find their way to developing their presence in our daily life.”
—Mehdi EL Ghaly

Read & Share

This guide contains two exclusive pieces about and by Moroccan storytellers:

- A profile of Ahmed Temiicha, the most famous storyteller in Marrakech, by Richard Hamilton, the author of *The Last Storytellers: Tales from the Heart of Morocco* (IB Tauris).
- A letter to readers from young Moroccan Storyteller Mehdi EL Ghaly.

Moroccan Arabic Vocabulary

As-Salaam-Alaikum	greeting, peace be upon you
halka	audience, ring or circle
djinn	genie
hajitek majitek	once upon a time
hlaykia	traditional storyteller
riad	house
shukran	thank you

Any words on this sheet in ***bold italic*** can be heard on an audio pronunciation guide on the “Inspiration & Resources” page of TheStorytellerBook.com.

The Last Storytellers of Marrakech

By Richard Hamilton

I found him sitting on a mattress
in a dark room praying.

It had taken days to track him
down in the narrow crumbling
streets of *Marrakech's* medina.
Ahmed Temiicha was once the
most famous storyteller in
Marrakech, but when I met him
he was old, frail and had gone
blind.



He lived in an old house or *riad*
with balconies overlooking an inner
courtyard of peeling walls and cracked tiles. I sat down and listened to his stories. His eyes
seemed to sparkle as he recounted a long twisting saga called, "*The Apples of El-Ghaliya bent
Mansour.*" She was an enchantress who lived beneath the seventh sea. She would sleep for a year
and stay awake for the next one. She would make her bed with half of her hair and cover herself
in the other half. Seven watchmen guarded seven doors of her underwater palace. Beyond its
walls was an orchard of golden apples. The hero of the story had to steal one of these in order to
marry a beautiful princess...

Like tales from 'A Thousand and One Nights', traditional Moroccan stories are fantasies; a world
where listeners young and old can escape from their everyday lives. But they are also fables,
parables and morality tales which teach us how to live a good life. The stories of Marrakech are
especially culturally rich because they have diverse influences: from the Arab Middle East, Sub-
Saharan Africa and the Berber people of North Africa.

As I listened to Ahmed's stories, I felt as if I was traveling back in time. This must have been
what it was like centuries ago in remote mountain villages or among the dunes of the desert,
when camel herders gathered around campfires and told tall tales beneath the stars. It had been a
privilege to listen to Ahmed in that small room with its broken tiles and old mattresses. By telling
stories he seemed to keep himself alive, and he enchanted me. In the land of the blind, the
storyteller is king.

Forty years ago, Ahmed was in good company. There were nearly twenty storytellers or *hlaykia*
performing in Marrakech's central square, the *Jemaa el Fna*. Now there are none. It is thought
storytellers told tales here since the founding of the Red City in the eleventh century. From
generation to generation they would pass on their stories, most of which were never written
down. But this chain of oral tradition is teetering on the brink of extinction and the culprit is
technology. Young Moroccans prefer to stare at computer screens or watch TV than listen to a
hlayki. We are witnessing the decline of a rich tradition unable to keep pace with modernity.
"When a storyteller dies," locals here will tell you, "a library burns." The stories will probably
crumble like the buildings of the medina or disappear like the peeling paint in Ahmed Temiicha's
riad.

When I left his house that afternoon, I blinked in the fierce sunlight feeling disorientated, as if
emerging from an afternoon film at a cinema. I walked down a narrow side street, ascended a
steep ramp and squeezed through a curious hole in the wall to find myself back in one of the
bustling main thoroughfares of the city. It was as if I had emerged from something out of Ahmed

The Last Storytellers of Marrakech (cont.)

Temiiicha's own stories – a ghoul's grotto, a cavern of treasures guarded by a *djinn* or the underwater palace of El-Ghaliya bent Mansour.

A year or so later I was told that Ahmed Temiiicha had died. His library had burned but at least I had managed to save a few of his stories or take a few of his golden apples.

There are some admirable attempts to revive storytelling in Marrakech. In a café in the *Kasbah*, called Café Clock, several young Moroccan apprentices are learning ancient tales from another master storyteller, *Ahmed Ezzarghani*. I hope and pray he succeeds in passing the baton to the next generation and keeping this superb tradition alive.

Richard Hamilton is the author of **The Last Storytellers: Tales from the Heart of Morocco** (IB Tauris).

A Letter to Readers from a Moroccan Storyteller

By Mehdi EL Ghaly

As-Salaam-Alaikum!

I want to share with you a story about a kid who grew up to be one of his idols.

Not long ago, there was a child, a baby boy, who grew up in a traditional Moroccan house in the old medina of Marrakech. He was so energetic that wherever he went he caused a mess. One night his grandmother told him, "I want to

tell you a story." She began with the words "*Hajitek Majitek*," which mean "Once upon a time" in Moroccan Arabic. The boy started listening, but eventually he fell asleep in the middle of the story. When he woke up the next day, he asked his grandmother for the rest of the story, but she replied that she would continue the story that evening. From that moment on, every evening, with her stories, his grandmother changed and built something within the boy that he would soon discover.

At the age of 9, he went by himself to Jamaa EL Fna, the famous square in Marrakech. There he found storytellers and other performers, and sat in one of the storytellers' circles. He was amazed by the performance that was so different from his grandmother's. He was exposed to two different kinds of stories, their morals, and their performers, which both contributed in developing his love for Moroccan storytelling at such young age. Every weekend and evenings after school, you would find him in one of these circles listening to the stories and learning about his Moroccan culture.

Ten years passed, and he came back to his favorite spot in the square. But he found no storyteller to listen to. He was disappointed, but this was not the end. This child grew up to be a young man who started to look for ways to learn and discover stories, and to share them with Moroccans and non-Moroccans. Learning and working with older storytellers had a special impact on him and he became close with those he looked up to when he was young. Now he does workshops and storytelling performances where he shares his Moroccan culture as an art, as it should be.



A Letter to Readers (cont.)

This child is me: *Mehdi EL Ghaly*. The journey hasn't been easy, but it was full of art and lessons that have built me into the storyteller that I am today. There are still a lot of things to learn and share with people. We have gotten carried away with all that the world has to offer, and that has pulled us away from the source of our identity: our culture. I want just to tell you this: Our culture is us, and we are our culture. We need to care about it more than we do.

Shukran,

Mehdi EL Ghaly

Mehdi EL Ghaly is a Moroccan storyteller and a university student, passionate about his Moroccan Culture.

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. A Moroccan proverb says, "When a storyteller dies, a library burns." What did Morocco and the world lose when master storyteller Ahmed Temiicha passed away?
2. Mehdi EL Ghaly learned his craft from his grandmother and from the remaining storytellers in Jamaa EL Fna, the famous square in Marrakech. Who tells stories in your life?
3. Is there a story from your family that has been passed down or retold? Maybe it is the story of the day you came into the family or the story of what country your family came from. What does that story tell you about yourself? What would you lose if you never knew that story?
4. Mehdi EL Ghaly says, "We have gotten carried away with all that the world has to offer." What do you think he means? Do you sometimes find yourself not wanting to listen to the person in front of you because you have a new text or video you want to watch? What might you lose if you stop listening?
5. Imagine yourself in the storytelling square of Jamaa EL Fna or the square pictured in **The Storyteller**. Describe the scene with all of your senses. Now describe yourself alone with your phone. Describe the scene with all of your senses.
6. In **The Storyteller**, the fountains dry up when people stop listening to storytellers. What fills the fountains again? Imagine if someone kept you from stories for a whole week. Imagine if you could not have stories from books, movies, music, or from your friends. Would you be "thirsty"? Explain.

Suggested Activities

1. **Audio Diary.** Every day of our lives is filled with stories. What do we want to remember? Consider collecting a day's worth of stories. Don't want to write in a journal at the end of the day? That's okay. Many of the best storytellers use the oral tradition. Use a voice recorder to create an audio diary of daily storytelling!
2. **Elders as Storytellers.** In every culture stories get handed down from our elders. Encourage or assign readers to interview older community members. You can find the Elders as Storytellers suggested activity on the "Inspiration & Resources" page of TheStorytellerBook.com.

HLAYKIA
Elders as Storytellers:
An Interview Activity

Hlaykia are the public storytellers of Morocco. They have been learning, preserving, and sharing stories for nearly one thousand years. These stories have been passed down from generation to generation and have become a part of the cultural fabric.



Every culture has a tradition of passing stories from the older to younger generation. While *hlaykia* spend a lifetime perfecting their craft, every person we encounter has a story to tell.

Can you prepare a classroom assignment or a cross-generational public program where young readers can interact with and interview older members of the community? You will, of course, create your own fine ideas and connections. Below are simply suggestions for an experience related to **The Storyteller**.

Interview Questions

In keeping with the themes of the picture book, elders could be asked about:

A time when they:

- Ran out of something important and found an interesting way to replace it.
- Made something with their hands and shared it with their community.
- Told a story and saved the day.
- Felt hope because of a story that was told to them.

Introduction Sheet

We have provided a sheet that will introduce the book and project to your elders. Look for an adaptable version of that sheet in Word on the “Inspiration & Resources” page of TheStorytellerBook.com.

Capturing Voices

Decide how you want to capture those stories. How can you integrate active listening into the interview process?

Capturing Faces

Can you incorporate photography or portrait drawing into the interview process?

The Storyteller

We have provided a sheet that is topped with the words, “The Storyteller.” Consider having your readers do their final write-up of their interview on this page, reinforcing that we are all storytellers.

Note on Moroccan Arabic

Any words on this sheet in *bold italic* can be heard on an audio pronunciation guide on the “Inspiration & Resources” page of TheStorytellerBook.com.



Dear ,

We have been reading and discussing a book called **The Storyteller** by Evan Turk (Atheneum). The illustrated book is set in Morocco, where the tradition of *hlaykia* or public storytellers goes back nearly one thousand years. The *hlaykia*'s stories have been passed down from generation to generation and have become a part of Morocco's cultural fabric.

The book is ultimately about the power of storytelling and our thirst to hear stories from one another. We are thirsty for *your* stories.

Would you be willing to have one of our readers interview you? We have selected some topics based on the themes of the book. You can pick one of these four topics below or choose your own story.

Could you tell your young interviewer about a time when you:

- Ran out of something important and found an interesting way to replace it?
- Made something with your hands and shared it with your community?
- Told a story and saved the day?
- Felt hope because of a story that was told to you?

Include contact information, permissions, use of photography, and so on!

THE Storyteller

HDITH O MAGHZEL A Weaving Activity

Hdith o maghzal is a phrase in Moroccan Arabic that translates roughly as “talking and doing at the same time.” It is a phrase that encourages people to keep working *while* they talk, and it has its origins with the woman weavers of North Africa. Weavers often sit side-by-side talking as they work at a loom. It is said that the stories the women tell each other find their way into the woven patterns.



For the purpose of this activity, you might consider the phrase as an opening for a conversation about the colors and themes of the book and how those colors and themes might influence an individual’s weaving.

Cardboard Loom

Can you weave on small looms with your readers? Explore the step-by-step guide on “how to weave on a cardboard loom” at Instructables.com:

<http://www.instructables.com/id/how-to-weave-on-a-cardboard-loom/>

Choosing Colors

If you choose to make cardboard looms, consider discussing the colors your readers choose for their weaving. You could choose to explore 1) color theory, 2) the meanings of the colors in the book, and/or 3) the concept of weaving a kingdom.

1. A lesson on the color wheel and color theory could feature complementary colors, warm and cool colors, and the cultural meaning of colors.
2. Illustrator Evan Turk chose his colors and patterns for the book very carefully. What can your readers discover about the story by looking at the context of the colors in the illustration, the font colors, and the frames around the stories? Some discussion points:
 - **Gold:** Both the sandstorm and the storyteller are golden. Why do you think that is?
 - **Blue:** Water, storytelling, and hope are all depicted in blue. Why do you think Evan chose that color, and how are these three things related?
 - **Green:** The story of the family who owned the Glorious Blue Water Bird is told on the page with a green font and bordered with green. What could the green stand for? Notice that there is blue mixed in with the green border. Why is blue a part of that story?
 - **Black:** The story of the princess starts with a black font and a black border. Watch how it changes. What is happening to the border and why? Why did her story move from black to blue?
3. The escaped princess “birthed an entire kingdom” with the loom and pile of yarn she discovered in the desert. Could your readers choose colors based on what they find essential to their survival or happiness? What colors would be in *their* kingdom?



ROSSOMAT Visual Literacy

Award-winning illustrator Evan Turk included incredible detail in the spreads for the picture book **The Storyteller**. In Arabic, illustration is called *rossom* or *rossomat* (plural). Explore the visual literacy or meaning behind the borders, colors, and styles of the illustrations with your readers.

Outside Border

Journey back through the book and look at just the outside borders. Why do you think Evan Turk chose blue and gold for these borders? Why does the intricacy of the pattern and the amount of blue increase as the book progresses?

The Sandstorm and the Last Storyteller

Both the sandstorm and the storyteller are depicted in a golden color. Why? Observe the shapes of the sandstorm. Compare those rounded shapes to the geometric patterned designs that appear on the pages of the stories about the lost princess, the weavers, and the Glorious Blue Water Bird.

The Lost Princess, the Weavers, and the Glorious Blue Water Bird

Why does Evan Turk choose to contrast the round shapes of the desert with the geometry in the stories? Do threads and weaving influence the design? Is weaving a form of storytelling?

Water, Storytelling, and Hope

Water, storytelling, and hope are all depicted in blue. Why do you think Evan chose that color, and how are these three things related? Can you explore how the blue increases as the story progresses? Can you explore how blue is shared from one to many?

The Endless Drought

The story of the family who owned the Glorious Blue Water Bird is told on the page with a green font and a green border. What could the green stand for? Notice that there is blue mixed in with the green border. Why is blue a part of that story?

The Glorious Blue Water Bird

Look at the border for this story. Why would the border be brown and spiky? What happens to the border when the blue thread is introduced? Why?

The Miraculous Yarn

The story of the princess starts with a black font and a black border. Watch how the border changes. What is happening to the border and why? Why did the princess's story move from black to blue?

Frames and Carpets

On the illustration above, see if your readers can retell the stories with only the frames as reminders.

Show the slideshow of carpets on the "Our Carpets" pages of AnzalWeavers.com. Compare the carpets to Evan Turk's frames. Evan visited the Anzal Weavers in Morocco. Explore that visit and its influence on Evan's work in the "Weaver as Storyteller" post on TheStorytellerBook.com. Look for it on the "The Art of 'The Storyteller'" page.

The Halka

The *halka* is the circle or audience that surrounds a storyteller. Did you notice that all of the characters from the stories surround the storyteller boy on the last spread? The old storyteller himself is even watching! Often storytellers will use people in the crowd to portray characters and create their stories.

Why is the border of this last spread completely blue?

More Resources

Evan Turk shares more about his process and the symbolism of his work under the "Explore Themes" pages of "The Art of 'The Storyteller'" and "Symbolism" at TheStorytellerBook.com.

For a growing list of resources and activities, visit the "Inspiration & Resources" page of that site.

Indigo, Tea & Fire

A highlight on the "The Art of 'The Storyteller'" page is the video called *The Art of 'The Storyteller' by Evan Turk*. The video is a demonstration of Evan using indigo, sugared tea, and heat to create a sample illustration for the book.

Note on Moroccan Arabic

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