Cultural Activities Month at School 2013
(Mois de la culture à l’école)
http://www1.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/cultureEducation/moisculture13/index_en.asp

Teachers’ Resources

Activity 1: ‘Perfume’ Urban Legend (Trigger Activity) C1

→ Teachers can email the ‘Perfume’ Urban Legend to their students as an introduction to the topic. When students come to class, question them about the email: Do they believe what it says? Did they follow the instructions? What was their reaction? Have they ever answered these kinds of emails before?

Activity 2: Our Definition of an Urban Legend (Activating Prior Knowledge) C1

→ Teachers distribute ‘Our Definition of an Urban Legend’. Students answer individually, then compare with a partner and finally, share their ideas with the whole class. At the end of the activity, there is a class consensus on the definition of an urban legend.

Activity 3: Urban Legend or True Story? C1-C2

→ Teachers can read the four short texts aloud to students or have students read the texts individually:
   - Alligators in the Sewers (Urban Legend)
   - Hot Dog (Urban Legend)
   - Hungry Snake (Urban Legend)
   - Wild Cat (True Story) http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/World/2014/03/11/21526051.html

→ Teachers ask students to determine which stories are true and which are urban legends. Students discuss their opinions in teams or with the whole class. How did they make their decision? What clues did they use?

Activity 4: Response Process - What Do You Think? C1-C2

→ Using the Response Process, teachers ask students to examine the three urban legends from the previous activity in order to identify the common features they share as well as compare their similarities and differences. They refer to their class definition from Activity 2 as well as the texts from Activity 3. Students identify the patterns in each text (which can serve as models for their own urban legends).
Response Process Questions:

→ Teachers can have students answer some or all of the following questions:
  
  o **Explore**: How are the three urban legends similar? How are they different? What key words (e.g. *use of colourful adjectives, use of exaggeration*) and verbs (e.g. *simple past tense*) are used in each text? What common features do urban legends share?
  
  o **Connect**: Which of the three stories did you find most credible and why? Which of the three urban legends did you find the least credible and why? Did you ever have a strange experience and when you told your friends/family, they did not believe you?
  
  o **Generalize**: Why do people invent urban legends? What purpose do they serve? What impact do urban legends have on society/on social media/on TV shows and films? Why do people like sensational, incredible or unconfirmed stories? Which other countries have urban legends and do you know of any?

### Activity 5: Demystifying Urban Legends

→ Teachers distribute the ‘Demystifying Urban Legends’ handout and ask students to highlight key words and ideas from the text. Was the class definition accurate? Was any information missing? What could be added to the class definitions? A class list of common features that urban legends share is created and displayed.

### Activity 6: Writing an Urban Legend

→ Teachers can ask Core ESL students to choose one of the three urban legends, write the dialogue for the story and then act it out for the entire class.

→ Teachers can ask EESL students to invent their own urban legend and share it with the class.

→ **For both Core ESL and EESL students**: In order to go a step further, teachers can have students use the production process to create a short video of the urban legend as well as learn about the text components of a script and/or storyboard.

→ EESL students could also explore digital storytelling as a way of presenting their own urban legend.
Extra Resources

TV Shows:
→ Urban Legends, Beyond Belief: Fact or Fiction
→ Mostly True Stories: Urban Legends revealed

Movies:
→ Urban Legends (1998)

Internet Links:
www.about.com
www.urbanlegendsonline.com
www.howstuffworks.com
www.hoax-slayer.com
www.ask.com
www.snopes.com
www.halloween-website.com
www.truthorfiction.com
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_Legend_(film)
www.listal.com/list/urban-legends-in-movies
www.free-tv-video-online.me/movies/2005/urban_legends_bloody_mary.html
voices.yahoo.com/top-10-movie-urban-legends-myths-4943504.html
www.cracked.com/...5-creepiest-urban-legends-that...
americanfolklore.net/folklore/urban-legends
http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/World/2014/03/11/21526051.html (audio file also available on the site)

Digital Storytelling:
http://issuu.com/jtray/docs/mapping-memories
http://www.mappingmemories.ca/project/tour-mapping-memories
https://www.facebook.com/cohds Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling is on Facebook.

Ideas for the production of a video (including scripts and storyboards):
→ Go to website: www.eslinsight.qc.ca

Click on Secondary / SPEAQ Workshops / Step-by-Step Video Production (2011-2012)
Activity 1
Perfume Urban Legend - Trigger Activity

E-mail Perfume Urban Legend to students:

Subject: SAFETY MESSAGE: this is real and very important!

Message:
This e-mail is designed to protect the population in general, it may not be happening in your hometown but, I've passed on the information just in case...For your personal safety and the women you love in your life, take this very seriously. This e-mail should be passed on to wives, life partners, sisters, mothers, well, all the female friends you have, etc. I know someone who was approached last week after leaving an ATM at a shopping center. Some guy asked her what perfume she was wearing and if she was interested in buying some cheap imitation. Fortunately, she refused because she had been sent an e-mail like this one warning her that some criminals set women up in parking lots asking them to smell some perfume they apparently sell at a reasonable price. **THIS IS NOT PERFUME; IT IS ETHER!** When you smell it, you'll pass out and they'll take your wallet, your purse, your car keys; they'll even have access to your house! Be careful, don't talk to strangers in shopping center parking lots; they could be using the same tactics. Please, this is no joke let everyone know about this so it doesn't happen again.
Activity 2
Our Definition of an Urban Legend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Think</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is an urban legend?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you know of any?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you know the difference between an urban legend, a hoax or a myth?</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Share</th>
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Activity 3
Urban Legend or True Story?

Text 1: Alligators in the Sewers
It was once a trend for New Yorkers vacationing in Florida to return home with small, baby alligators for their children to raise as pets. These infant gators eventually grew up and outlived their cuteness, they were no longer convenient. At which point, their desperate owners flushed them down the toilet to get rid of them. Some of these hastily disposed of creatures survived and bred in the dank Manhattan sewer system. Now, there are fully grown albino alligators living beneath the streets of New York City. They are believed to be albino and also blind, having lost their eyesight and the pigment in their hides because they live in constant darkness. They live underneath the busy Big Apple completely hidden from human beings; apart from the rare heart-stopping encounters between sewer gators and sewer workers.

Text 2: Hot Dog
An old lady was asked to look after her neighbour’s small dog, a Terrier. Being the kind lady that she was, she agreed. One day, when taking the dog out for a long afternoon walk, it started to rain. The elderly woman, with the dog trailing after her, hurriedly returned home, both were soaked. The poor little animal was shivering, and wanting to dry it; she decided to put the dog in the microwave for a short period of time. When the dog was put inside, the lady’s phone rang. It was a friend she hadn’t heard of for a while. She was excited to hear all the latest gossip and incidentally, forgot all about the pooch in the microwave. When she finally ended the call, she realized the microwave was still on! As she opened the microwave door, all that was left of the dog was a gory mess!
Activity 3 (continued)
Urban Legend or True Story?

Text 3: Hungry Snake
There was a couple, living in Vancouver, who owned a python. It was a very large snake and they had it for a while so they did not put it in a cage and they let it slither freely in their house. The couple started being concerned when the snake suddenly stopped eating. All it would do all day was lay around and occasionally it would slither onto their bed and stretch its body out along one of the people lying down. They finally decided to take the snake to the veterinarian because it would not eat anything, even its favourite meals. Their doctor did a thorough exam of the animal and turned to the couple to say: "You need to get rid of this snake immediately! It has refused its food because it’s getting ready to eat you! When it stretches along your body, it’s because he’s measuring how tall you are and if he can fit you into his body!"

Text 4: Wild Cat
March 11, 2014

A rampaging, 22-pound Oregon house cat with a "history of violence" attacked a baby and trapped a family and their dog in a bedroom at their Portland home before being captured by police. The Sunday evening incident began when the cat, a black-and-white Himalayan, scratched a 7-month-old baby in the face. The baby’s father kicked the cat in the backside, which sent it into a rage, and the parents and baby, along with their dog, retreated into a bedroom as the father called police. Meanwhile, the cat blocked the bedroom doorway and could be heard on the 911 call screeching loudly. When officers arrived and entered the house, they saw the cat scurry into the kitchen. After it scrambled atop the refrigerator, officers snared it and put it in a travel-style kennel. Safely behind bars, the cat was left in the custody of the family. It was not clear what they intend to do with the animal. The baby suffered some scratches to the face but was not seriously hurt.
### Activity 4
Response Process: What Do You Think?

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Activity 5
Demystifying Urban Legends

What are Urban Legends?
Urban legends are fictional, second-hand stories, told as true and just plausible enough to be believed. They are mostly about some horrific, embarrassing, ironic or exasperating series of events that supposedly happened to a real person. Despite their names (urban legends, urban myths, and urban tales) they don’t always originate in urban settings. The terms are simply used to differentiate between modern legends and traditional folklore. They are most likely to be framed as cautionary tales; whether factual or not, urban legends are meant to be believed. In lieu of evidence, however, the teller of an urban legend is apt to rely on skilful storytelling and reference to putatively trustworthy sources. For example, the storyteller could say “...it really happened to my neighbour’s brother’s best friend” to convince hearers of the urban legend’s veracity. It also serves to personalize the urban legend and enhance it.

Different Versions
One way to differentiate urban legends from other narrative forms (popular fiction, TV dramas or news stories) is to compare where they came from and how they are propagated. Unlike fiction or drama, which are usually produced by individual authors, urban legends tend to emerge spontaneously and are rarely traceable to a single source. Also, urban legends are mostly spread through interpersonal communication, from individual to individual, e-mails for example and unusually via mass media or other institutional means. Lastly, urban legends change over time due to repetition and embellishment, hence no two versions are ever exactly alike; there can be as many variants as there are tellers of the tale.

Common Features
A “classic” urban legend will present most of these characteristics:
- It’s a narrative.
- It’s alleged to be true but its veracity is unproven.
- It’s just plausible enough to be believed.
- It’s of undetermined origin.
- It varies in the telling, there are many versions.
- It’s likely to take the form of a warning or it contains a moral lesson of some kind.
- It’s attributed to a second-hand source.
- There is a lack of specific information regarding the incident.

Sources: Wikipedia.org, the free encyclopedia – Urban Legends
About.com – Urban Legends