

FAITH AND FOLK

Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy, Dillard University

Introduction/Background

Out of intense racial, social, and economic exploitation and injustice, Black Americans nurtured and created a dynamic **culture**. In spite of being stolen from their Mother/Fatherland in Africa, denied their language and native religions, education, and even the ability to “make and keep their own families,” slaves survived and passed on a sense of who they are even in a strange land and in a different language. They built and developed **kinship networks**, religious beliefs, families, all of which were infused with their values and **race knowledge**. In addition, Africans in America produced a rich and expressive **culture** articulating their deepest feelings, aspirations, and wishes.

Historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, calls New Orleans, Louisiana “the most African city in America.” The Roberts family and their friends, as depicted in Tia Lessin and Carl Deal’s *Trouble the Water*, exhibit many Black American religious **beliefs, customs, and traditions** particularly “**Faith**,” which enables them to survive the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The Roberts family exhibited a unique response to this disaster, one that is at once creative and an up-beat response to an unequalled event of both physical and psychological loss. Therefore, it is essential to study Black culture, and the black cultural foundation of religious “**Faith**,” which is deeply ingrained in **Black American culture** to more fully understand the context and content of their approach, attitudes, and response to disaster.

This Module then investigates the complex cultural meanings in the New Orleans survivors’ speech in *Trouble the Water*; how they address one another, how they help one another, how and why they help others, how they are infused within a **cultural context** of being Black, poor, and trying to survive their environment which changes drastically before their eyes.

This Module will explore definitions and principles of the study of **Folklore, the lore of the Folk, and Faith as a cultural construct** within an interdisciplinary approach to *Trouble the Water*. This interdisciplinary nature will include some references to the historical background of **Blacks in America, Blacks in the Christian Church, and the Black Church** experience as a cultural practice whether attached to a particular Christian denomination or not. Through this cultural **Folklore** investigation, students will be introduced to the field of **Folklore**, its practices, as a framework for appreciating the Roberts family’s practices of “good” Christian virtues, which are expressions of the **African World View**, a view that is consistent whether Blacks are from Barbados, Trinidad, Brazil, South Africa, or America: God, Family, Community.

In further effort to aid the professor/teacher, the unit, though designed for three days, may take a little longer to complete all activities, discussion, evaluation, and review.



Subject Kimberly Roberts recovers a precious photograph in a scene from *Trouble the Water*, Sept. 16, 2005. Courtesy Elsewhere Films.

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PART I: Folklore in *Trouble the Water*

Topic Areas

Folklore as depicted in the film and displayed by film principals, foundations of culture, The Culture of Blacks as a daily practice and lifestyle, Historical & Cultural antecedents of culture in the Black community

Subject Areas

Folklore as cultural practice, Folklore for the individual and the community among Blacks, Black History, Folklore, American History for Cultural practices (jokes, sayings, raps) in the Black community

Teacher Objectives

- To provide students with a wider cultural and social understanding through Folklore, Black History, American History for Cultural practices among Blacks
- Engage students in the background of cultural spirit historically in Black culture
- Provide students with appreciation and knowledge of the cultural heritage of the Blacks in America and their influence on American culture overall perpetuating a heritage
- Stimulate and foster understanding of the creative expression, stories, lore of cultural ideals in the Black community and in the larger community
- Promote understanding of the link between a foundation of Black cultural traditions and practice leading to the sense of “Folklore” exhibited in *Trouble the Water*

Learner Objectives

- To help students understand that Black culture has many traditions practiced daily
- To help students learn some of the elements of that culture and its effect on Blacks overall
- To help students understand the complex idea of Folklore, from its oral African roots to today
- To help students understand the value of Black cultural foundation in America as an extensive folk tradition particularly in the south and New Orleans
- To help students evaluate their reception of *Trouble the Water* and extend their viewing experience across curriculum to include Culture, Folklore, and History
- To help students in their growth and understanding of humanity in general, how the foundation of Folklore fosters a positive approach to life and the practice of generosity, neighborliness, and working for the greater good.

Folklore in *Trouble the Water*

Materials

The feature documentary film, *Trouble the Water*
Jokes, sayings, games, dances, or recipes collected by students
Chalk board
Curriculum module on “Folklore,” by Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy, Author, Folklorist

Objectives

- Students will learn to appreciate the value of “Folklore” as an integral survival tool of Blacks
- Students will learn to recognize how the notion of “Folklore” operates in *Trouble the Water*
- Students will learn how this “Folklore” emerges as a cultural practice through its daily life
- Students will learn how changes in the American economic, social, and cultural climate in New Orleans produced the creative and unique response of “Folklore” in the subjects of *Trouble the Water* which urged them to action, thereby taking charge of their destiny

Outcomes

At the end of a one-hour lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify Folklore, its content as a discipline
- Identify local Folklore and folklife
- Identify or interpret the world view or values of *Trouble the Water* principals, particularly the “rapping” of Black Kold Madina.

Procedures

Students and Teacher view *Trouble the Water*, this time with attention to the notion of Folklore.

Viewing will be followed with discussions of key terms and topics of cultural and historical significance as outlined in this curriculum module on “Folklore.”

Student and Teacher viewing will be further augmented with activities, both creative and investigative, to enable them to apply what findings occur.

Teachers will direct discussion of further study and additional enrichment activities to foster greater understanding of the dynamic of a Black culture where “Folklore” is central, and how these factors are apparent in *Trouble the Water*.

Set Up

The day prior, introduce students to the notion of Folklore, such as jokes, raps, sayings, even legends. If you don’t know any, ask colleagues or neighbors for theirs.

In class, the Teacher may ask students: “Do you now any jokes?” ,“Raps?”, “Sayings?”, Then ask how the student came to know these things. What do these things reveal about the teller, about you for passing it on?

Teacher may hand out the curriculum module: “Folklore: Concepts and Definitions” by Mona Lisa Saloy.

Student Motivation

Think of the silly jokes they heard as a kid, such as “Knock-knock jokes.” Who wrote these? Why do kids pass them on? Does it matter that we don’t know who wrote them? Another example may be scary stories. Do they know any scary stories?

Any tales particular to New Orleans: the spooky tales of the “Mona Lisa” ghost in City Park. Ask: What about tales about a neighborhood, a region? Encourage students to think of legends, myths, tales they may have learned earlier, or any they’ve heard of such as “Shine” stories, or animal tales. “You can take a horse to the water, but you can’t make him drink.”

Teacher/Professor

Use the motivation information to get students to respond and discuss this passing on of these tales or jokes. On the board, list famous tales, common sayings, raps, under appropriate headings. You begin the list. Then, get students to fill in the rest of the list.

Discussion

Discuss and explain good examples, weaving in definitions of folklore. Explain that this unit will focus on the notion of Black culture, and “Faith” as expressed throughout *Trouble the Water* as a part of that culture. First, together, you will investigate Black cultural lore, what folks say. Give an overview of the entire unit, explaining that the notion of Faith depicted in the film is deeply embedded in Black culture, history, music and worship.

You may want to extend this introductory unit to include reading from early African American Folklore, kids games.

You can ask each student to “interview” a friend, or a grown-up for an example.

In the case of students “collecting,” just encourage them to faithfully write down everything from what the person wore, to the time of day, to whether this is common for the person or unusual, whether they heard this prior.

*** See attachments at end of unit for assignments ***

Follow-up to Assignment 1

Day One:

When students return with the completed interview forms, invite sharing. Allow students to discuss the difficulty of collecting or getting permission for people to participate. Ask: did anyone decline to participate? Why? In *Trouble the Water*, did students notice how some people declined to be interviewed, how they hid their faces?



Clip 1: [07:55] Chapter 1, Larry asks Kimberly not to videotape him;

Clip 2: [43:20] Chapter 6, Long tracking shot filmed by a network news producer outside the Morial convention center where people were covering their face, used to depict the Roberts group leaving the city in a truck.

Do they now understand more about the challenges of creating a documentary film?

Review “Folklore Concepts and Definitions,” with examples. Orally quiz students on key Folklore Concepts and Definitions. For evaluation, use the following questions.

Questions for Quiz:

- What is Folklore?
- What is Oral Literature?
- Give an example of an oral transmission?
- What is Folklife?
- How is Folklife related to Folklore?
- What is the function of Folklore?
- In *Trouble the Water*, can you recall any other sayings that qualify as Folklore? Which ones? Why? How was the term or saying used? What was meant?
- Of the Folk you interviewed, can you articulate what might be the World View of the person?
- Explain.

Follow-up to Assignment 2

Day Two:

When students return with the completed interview forms, invite sharing.

Review “Folklore Concepts and Definitions,” with examples. Orally quiz students on key Folklore Concepts and Definitions. For evaluation, use the following questions.

Questions for Quiz:

- What is Folklore?
- Why is a dance Folklore?
- Why is a recipe Folklore?
- Give an example of an oral transmission?
- How is the student’s culture continued when they do this dance or recipe?
- When the student teaches another the dance or recipe, what is happening?
- Why is this practice of culture important?
- In *Trouble the Water*, can you recall any other sayings or actions that qualify as Folklore? Which ones? Why? How was the term or saying used? What was meant?
- Of the Folk you interviewed, can you explain what idea or practices you share (the World View) with the person?

FOLKLORE: CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

by Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy, Author, Folklorist

Folklore, a brief introduction

Like History, Folklore is a field of study and the content of that field. Folklore began as an area of learning in eighteenth century Europe when British antiquarians and German philologists looked closely at lower class ways and life habits. The now famous Grimm brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm collected oral folk narratives and interpretations of German mythology. In 1812, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published volumes of this material and called the subject *Volkskunde*. (The Grimm's work remains with us today in the form of fairy tale books derived from the Grimms' early lore collection.) In those early times, this type of study was known as "popular antiquities." Later the term Folklore came into use in a letter to the journal *Athenaeum*, which catered to intellectual curiosity. In the letter from an English antiquarian, William John Thomas, the writer suggested that the awkward term "popular antiquities" be replaced with the new word "Folk-lore," and so it was.

In nineteenth century America, humanitarians and scholars sympathetic to the Native American genocide made a concerted effort to begin to collect lore, especially since by then many of these various peoples learned English and could aid the Folklorist in the task of collecting myths, legends, sayings, creation stories in the original language and have the advantage of an insider's insight. Those early works are invaluable, and that work is not done yet.

Similarly, humanitarians in the form of Abolitionists, Folklorists, and Anthropologists recognized the significance of beginning to capture the lore of Africans in America at the waning of slavery. It was then believed that only those who experienced slavery kept "Africanisms" or the old ways. Nothing was further from the truth. Today, what is clearly recognized by scholars and historians alike is the innate "toughness" of the body of Black traditions surviving still in America. As a result, Black Folklore persists whether in song, sayings, tales, performance style, dance, proverbs, foodways, and even customs such as the dancing of umbrellas in the Second Line Dance of New Orleans popularly thought to occur only in Jazz funerals.

This Folklore has become an entire discipline composed of its own scientific terminology, methods, and theories. Folklore is also the collected, studied, and interpreted oral traditions of a people.

Folklore & Folklife: People's Traditions

A people's folklore is the body of traditions that people preserve and hand down through the generations, not through the formal teaching of schools and churches, but unofficially, as in a family, neighborhood, or occupational group, or among children who play together. This verbal lore or Folklore becomes songs, tales, sayings and proverbs, or word games that are passed on by word of mouth. This Folklore is also a part of this country's historical development, and it is called our Oral Literature. Oral Literature may also be

called verbal art or expressive literature, which includes any sung, spoken, or voiced utterance with repetitive patterns. Under Oral Literature falls a large area called folk narrative, which can appear as a folk song or folk poetry. These narratives are passed on by word-of-mouth with no known authorship. The long forms may include anecdotes, rhymes, epics. The short forms may include jokes, riddles, or proverbs. The wealth of these oral forms often filters into written literature in the form of stories, plays, or novels. In addition, these folk expressions are not always verbal. The non-verbal folk forms may be chants, cries, yodels, hollers, and laments.

Folklife

Related to Folklore is the term Folklife. Folklore is concerned with collecting, studying, and preserving the oral traditions of people, while Folklife encompasses the entire culture, which includes the Oral literature and verbal traditions. Folklife focuses more on the material culture or the visible physical life that existed before and alongside industrial technology. This material culture is any product a people produce like basket making, weaving, recipes, or their processes, such as how a people develop performance techniques, home building, clothes making, food preparation farming, and fishing.

Folklore and Anthropology

Folklore is the cultural wing of Anthropology. Anthropology is the scientific study of man's behavior. Anthropology's focus is man, and Anthropologists use materials and methods to understand physical man and his culture. Since studying culture relates to the study of man, anthropologists are indeed Folklorists, and Folklore is a part of Anthropology. Folklore is the body of common values, beliefs, and traditions of a people--generally uneducated people as they orally pass on their knowledge.

Definitions

Anthropology

Definition: Anthropology is the scientific study of man's behavior. Anthropology's focus is man, and anthropologists use materials and methods to understand physical man and his culture.

Context: "The word anthropology itself tells the basic story — from the Greek *anthropos* ("human") and *logia* ("study") — it is the study of humankind, from its beginnings millions of years ago to the present day.

Nothing human is alien to anthropology. Indeed, of the many disciplines that study our species, *Homo sapiens*, only anthropology seeks to understand the whole panorama — in geographic space and evolutionary time — of human existence" (aaanet.org). Since studying culture relates to the study of man, Anthropologists are indeed Folklorists, and Folklore is a part of Anthropology.

Antiquities

Definition: Generally, antiquity refers to the ancient past, especially prior to the Middle Ages. Antiquities refer to art, the arts, objects, written works, even buildings from the ancient past. Context: Popular antiquities were the earliest terms referring to the study of stories (lore), arts, traditions of early peoples. Popular antiquities later became referred to as Folklore.

Collector

Definition: The Collector is the Folklorist as she/he gathers of collects, documents, raw lore in interviews.

Folk

Definition: The Folk refers to “any group of people who share at least one common factor,” according to Alan Dundes, Folklorist.

Context: Folklorist Elliott Oring further defines the “Folk” as common people or peasantry with a common denominator, remnants of an ancient people with common tales, sayings, songs, and customs that echo the life and spirit of their ancestral folk.

Folklife

Definition: Folklife is community life and values, artfully expressed in myriad forms and interactions.

Context: Universal, diverse, and enduring, Folklife enriches the nation and makes us a commonwealth of cultures.

Folklore

Definition: Folklore is the traditional art, literature, knowledge, and practice that is disseminated largely through oral communication and behavioral example, such as oral songs and literature.

Context: The term “folklore” was first coined by William J Thoms in 1846. Every group with a sense of its own identity shares, as a central part of that identity, folk traditions—the things that people traditionally believe (planting practices, family traditions, and other elements of worldview), do (dance, make music, sew clothing), know (how to build an irrigation dam, how to nurse an ailment, how to prepare barbecue), make (architecture, art, craft), and say (personal experience stories, riddles, song lyrics). As these examples indicate, in most instances there is no hard-and-fast separation of

these categories, whether in everyday life or in folklorists’ work. Folklore, simply put, is the body of traditions that people preserve and hand down through the generations, not through the formal teaching of schools and churches, but unofficially, as in a family, neighborhood, or occupational group, or among children who play together, such as: songs, tales, sayings and proverbs, or word games that are passed on by word of mouth.

Folklore Function

Definition: Folklore function is to convey the beliefs, world view, customs, identity of a people.

Folktale

Definition: A story or legend forming part of an oral tradition. Folktales possess many or all of the characteristics below:

- Are generally part of the oral tradition of a group.
- Are more frequently told than read
- Are passed down from one generation to another
- Take on the characteristics of the time and place in which they are told
- Sometimes take on the personality of the storyteller
- Speak to universal and timeless themes.
- Try to make sense of our existence, help humans cope with the world in which they live, or explain the origin of something.
- Are often about the common person

- May contain supernatural elements
- Function to validate certain aspects of culture. <http://www.americanfolklore.net/what-is-folklore.html>

Informant

Definition: The Informant is the name used in Folklore for the Tradition Bearer, the one who passes on the customs of the people. Informant is often replaced with the term Tradition Bearer.

Material Culture

Definition: Any product a people produce.

Context: Such products include basket making, weaving, recipes, or their processes such as how a people develop performance techniques, home-building, clothes making, food preparation, farming, and fishing.

Oral Transmission

Definition: The passing of sayings, jokes, riddles, proverbs, beliefs, any traditions by word-of-mouth, generation-to-generation, face-to-face.

Context: In particular, these are traditions and sayings or beliefs learned from one another, outside of formal institutions.

Oral Literature

Definition: Oral literature is the verbal art of expressive literature which includes any sung, spoken, or voiced utterance often with repetitive patterns.

Context: Oral literature includes sidewalk songs, rhymes, spirituals or “sorrow songs,” hollers, chants, cries, jokes, riddles, yodels.

Popular Antiquities

Definition: Popular Antiquities is the first name for early lore collection.

Proverb

Definition: A proverb is a statement passed on in a fixed form orally and conveys some truth.

Rule of Faith

Definition: The word rule (Latin *regula*, Gr. *kanon*) means a standard by which something can be tested, and the rule of faith means something extrinsic to our faith, and serving as its norm or measure (newadvent.org).

Context: Since faith is Divine and infallible, the rule of faith must be also Divine and infallible; and since faith is supernatural assent to Divine truths upon Divine authority, the ultimate or remote rule of faith must be the truthfulness of God in revealing Himself. But since Divine revelation is contained in the written books and unwritten traditions (Vatican Council I, ii), the Bible and Divine tradition must be the rule of our faith; since, however, these are only silent witnesses and cannot interpret themselves, they are commonly termed “proximate but inanimate rules of faith.” Unless, then, the Bible and tradition are to be profitless, we must look for some proximate rule which shall be animate or living (newadvent.org).

Tradition Bearer

Definition: The Tradition Bearer is the name used in Folklore for the Informant, the one who passes on the customs of the people. Tradition Bearer is often replaced with the term Informant.

World View

Definition: World View is a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world: a Christian World View, for example, revolves around the battle of good and evil.

Context: World View is expressed in a group's Folklore. World View incorporates the dominant concerns, ethos, consciousness of a region or group; it is expressed in the Folklore which reinforces and validates their World View. It also includes the attitude, nature, feelings, values. For the Japanese people, it is Ancestors first. For Blacks, whether in Africa, the Caribbean, or America, it is God (or a belief in the Divine), Family, and Community.

PART II: Faith in *Trouble the Water*

Topic Areas

Faith as depicted in the film and displayed by the subjects, foundations of faith, The Culture of Christian Religion as a Foundation for Religious training in faith, Historical & Cultural antecedents of Faith in the Black community

Subject Areas

Faith as cultural practice, Faith for the individual and the community among Blacks, Black History, Folklore, American History for Christian Cultural practices in the Black community

Teacher Objectives

- To provide students of all faiths with a wider cultural and social understanding through Folklore, Black History, American History for Christian Cultural practices among Blacks Engage students of all faiths in the background of religious spirit historically in Black culture
- Provide students of all faiths with appreciation and knowledge of the cultural heritage of the Black church in America and its influence on Black culture overall perpetuating a heritage
- Stimulate and foster understanding of the creative expression, stories, lore of religious ideals in the Black community and in the larger community
- Promote understanding of the link between a foundation of religious training and religious practice leading to the sense of “Faith” exhibited in *Trouble the Water*

Learner Objectives

- To help students of all faiths learn the effect of Christian religious training on Black culture
- To help students of all faiths understand the complex history of Faith in the context of *Trouble the Water*; from its oral African roots to today
- To help students of all faiths understand the value of Black religious foundation in America as an extensive folk tradition particularly in the south and New Orleans, a city of churches
- To help students of all faiths evaluate their reception of *Trouble the Water* and extend their viewing experience across curriculum to include Culture, Folklore, and History

Materials

The feature length documentary film “*Trouble the Water*.”
Curriculum Module on “Faith” by Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy, Author, Folklorist
Chalk board
Film clips identified in the Curriculum Module on “Faith”

Objectives

- Students will learn to appreciate the value of “Faith” as an integral survival tool of Blacks
- Students will learn to recognize how the notion of “Faith”

operates in *Trouble the Water*

- Students will learn how this “Faith” emerged as a cultural practice through its roots in Black Christianity

Outcomes

At the end of a one-hour lesson, students will be able to:
Identify Faith, its meaning in Christianity as an idea and a Black cultural practice
Identify the expressions of Faith within *Trouble the Water*
Identify the practice of Faith as represented in *Trouble the Water*

Procedures

Students and Teacher view *Trouble the Water* again, this time with attention to the notion of Faith
Viewing will be followed with discussions of key terms and topics of cultural and historical significance as outlined in this curriculum module on “Faith.”
Student and Teacher viewing will be further augmented with activities, both creative and investigative, to enable them to apply what findings occur.
Teachers will direct discussion of further study and additional enrichment activities to foster greater understanding of the dynamic of a Black culture where “Faith” is central.

Set Up

The day prior, introduce students to the notion of the Black Church, Christianity, perhaps give examples of sacred songs they might know, or any expressions of faith. If you don’t know any, ask colleagues, friends, or neighbors for theirs. In class, the Teacher may ask students: “Do you know any Churches? which ones?” “Do you know of any Black Churches, which ones?” “Name some sacred songs that speak of faith.” “Provide any sayings that mention God.” Then ask how the student came to know these things. What do these sayings reveal about the teller, about you for passing it on?
Curriculum Module on “Faith” by Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy, Author, Folklorist

Student Motivation

Ask students to think of their own religious or faith-based experiences or rituals, such as “Baptism” or “Bar Mitzvah,” or “Ramadan.” Can they share any stories? Are any tales particular to New Orleans? What is the experience like in a Baptist church versus a Catholic church? A Temple as opposed to a Mosque? What about tales about a religion; can someone share one?

Perhaps have students tell about any sacred holiday celebrations. Which celebrations seem sacred; which ones do not and why? Encourage students to think of church experiences they may have learned earlier, or prayers they’ve heard of such as before bed or eating. Do students know that saying “Merry Christmas” refers to Christianity?

Teacher/Professor

Use the motivation information to get students to respond and discuss this widespread multi-faith tenet of “loving one’s neighbor” and of “having faith in God.” On the board, list sacred songs, prayers, even public examples such as “In God We Trust” on our money (which bills, coins?), common sayings, under appropriate headings. You begin the list. Then, get students to fill in the rest of the list.

Discussion

Discuss and explain good examples, weaving in definitions of folklore. Explain that this unit will focus on the notion of “Faith” as expressed throughout *Trouble the Water*. Give an overview of the entire unit, explaining that the notion of “Faith” of Katrina survivors as depicted in the film is deeply embedded in Black culture, history, music and worship. You may want to extend this introductory unit to include reading from actual spirituals, or asking students to look at their currency. You might also ask students to list examples of “expressions of faith” in the film; use these for discussion. You can ask each student to “interview” a friend as an example. You can ask each student to “interview” a grown up for an example. In the case of students “collecting,” just encourage them to faithfully write down everything from what the person wore, to the time of day, to whether this is common for the person or unusual, whether they heard this prior. Follow-up to Assignment 1

*** See attachments at end of unit for assignments ***

Day Three:

When students return with the completed interview forms, invite sharing. Allow students to discuss the difficulty of collecting or getting permission for people to participate. Ask: did anyone decline to participate?

Review Faith Concepts and Definitions, with examples. Orally quiz students on key Faith Concepts and Definitions. For evaluation, use the following questions.

Questions for Quiz:

- What is Faith?
- What is Christianity?
- Give an example of a Christian Church?
- Name a Black Church or type of Black Church?
- Give an example of an expression of Faith (one you heard)?
- Give an example of an expression of Faith from *Trouble the Water*?
- How is Faith depicted in the film generally?
- In *Trouble the Water*, can you recall any sayings that qualify as Faith? For example, Brian and Kimberly have an exchange in Memphis, in which Brian says: at [1:09:43 Chapter 9] “Those who wait up on the Lord shall renew their strength.”

What others can you identify? Why? How was the term or saying used? What did it mean to you?

Of the Folk you interviewed, can you articulate what might be the religious cultural view of the person?

Explain.



Documentary subjects Kimberly Roberts, Scott Roberts, and Brian Nobles pray together in the aftermath of Katrina. Courtesy Elsewhere Films.

FAITH: CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, AND EXAMPLES
by Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy, Author, Folklorist

What is Faith?

A simple five-letter word, faith, contains powerful meaning. Even in its earliest meaning, or etymology, faith “ from ‘Middle English *feith*, from Anglo-French *feid, fei*, from Latin *fides*; akin to Latin *fidere* means to trust — or **bide** meaning wait for.” As early as the 13th century, faith means “1. a: allegiance to duty or a person: loyalty; b (1): fidelity to one’s promises; (2) sincerity of intensions; 2 a (1): belief and trust in and loyalty to God; (2): belief in the traditional doctrines of a religious b (1): firm belief in something for which there is no proof (2): complete trust; 3: something that his believed especially with strong conviction; especially: a system of religious beliefs <the Protestant *faith*> synonyms, see belief; for example--on *faith*: without question <took everything he said on faith>” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/faith>). Then in a lay or non-religious sense, faith is loyalty and fidelity; and in a religious sense, firm belief and complete trust. This sense of loyalty and trust is at the heart of the use of faith in the film *Trouble the Water*.

In the film, *Trouble the Water*, there is no specific religion stated or professed; but clearly, from the overt expressions of faith, there is a religious context for the use of faith. Then for the religious sense of the word, it is helpful to review the meaning of faith from the Bible, which is the foundation of religious meaning for Christians and Jews especially the Old Testament. “In the Old Testament, the Hebrew means *steadfastness* (Exodus 17:12), where it is used to describe the strengthening of Moses’ hands; so it comes to mean *faithfulness*, whether of God towards man (Deuteronomy 32:4) or of man towards God (Psalm 118:30). When signifying man’s attitude towards God, it means *trustfulness* or *fiducia*” (newadvent.org).

Although, the Catholic Encyclopedia (CE) clearly states that from the early Hebrew, faith did not mean belief exactly except as determined by the context of its use. The Catholic Encyclopedia (CE) further says that “one can not trust a person or their promises without first believing” and the Hebrew “does not in itself contain the notion of belief, it must necessarily presuppose it” (newadvent.org). The CE further warns against contemporary interpretations of faith versus belief, which become vague and distort the true meaning of faith. For early modern theologians, “From one end of the Scripture to the other, faith is trust and only trust” (Hibbert Journal Oct. 1907, qtd in newadvent.org).

We might apply this sense of trust when Kimberly says she puts her “trust” in God at various places throughout the film, as in the scene where the city worker in Alexandria turns their water back on: [54:00 Chapter 7]



KIM: That’s a blessing from God right there.
WORKER: I don’t know how long they’ll keep it on.
SCOTT: Good Samaritan, that’s his name.
KIM: See there you go. See When you just trust in God.

He’ll just still send miracles your way. Look at that, man. That’s just wonderful. See that? Real water. We ain’t gonna waste none, though.

Or when Brian says he puts his “trust” in God in Memphis:



[1:06:52 Chapter 9]
BRIAN NOBLES: Man, second day in Memphis, a new beginning. So many places we got to go to. We got to get these things together – about getting our houses, you know and getting everything straight. I feel great about this day. This is the day I’ve been waiting for.
CARL: Are you scared about the future?
BRIAN: I know one thing. He’s gonna keep me going and keep me faithful in his word, so nah, I’m not afraid. Fear is of the devil. I serve a true and living God.

As a result, we might say Kimberly and Brian have “faith” and therefore have “trust” in God, by their actions, by their expressions, by their faithfulness in habit.

This brings us to an important set of points about faith. For Christians, faith is objective and subjective. Faith, objectively, “stands for the sum of truths revealed by God in Scripture and tradition in which the Church (see Rule of Faith) presents to us in a brief form in her creeds. Faith is also subjective. Subjectively, faith stands for the habit or virtue by which we assent to those truths” (newadvent.org). For Catholic theologians, some knowledge of God must be present for faith to exist. This knowledge can be what we know by reason or revealed by God as in faith as a gift to saints and prophets of old; that is, that some people know what is true by “natural reason, or by Divine revelation” (newadvent.org). Thus we may know truth intellectually, intuitively, but the truth of faith must be based on some authority, what we learn or study as humans, what is universally accepted as true, or what is Divinely given to us, considered Divine Faith.

Foundation of Faith: the Black Church

Africa, the Mother/Fatherland of American Blacks, is a large continent comprised of many cultures, languages, and peoples. Whether Akan or Dogon, whether Zulu or Ashanti, Africans were stolen primarily from the west but from all over Africa, but they shared a similar World View, or belief system common to them all. Since those first Africans were transported to the New World as slaves to America, a wealth of common beliefs remained: the belief in a Higher Power, God, reverence for the Divine first, then allegiance to family, then community (or our neighbors). These cores of common beliefs were transported in a wealth of oral expressions: moans, chants, and cries, which gave birth to a body of lore, spirituals (sacred songs), and songs (work songs). Black Americans have maintained a full and widespread storytelling tradition in spite of centuries of systematic denial of basic human rights, in spite of urbanization, industrial growth, education, and mass communications. This phenomenon was possible because Blacks--for their own survival and sanity-formed a culture within the dominant culture, one that escaped formal education, material progress, and is still oral with its own traditions.

In the Mother/Fatherland, Africa, people chanted, sang, or performed long oral narratives concerning God, heroes, even demons. An African example is “Sundiata,” an epic poem performed about many brave and heroic exploits of the king of Mali.

A European example is “Beowulf,” the epic poem about the Danish king Hrothgar and his reign. These oral works translated the essential beliefs of the people, and carry their world view. This oral practice of song and story was present with the first African slaves in America.

Writing of his slave experiences, Frederick Douglass wrote in *My Bondage and My Freedom* that:

Slaves were generally expected to sing as well as to work. A silent slave is not liked by masters or overseers. “Make a noise,” make a noise,” and “bear and hand,” are words usually addressed to the slaves when there is silence amongst them. This may account for the almost constant singing heard in the southern states These were not always merry. . . on the contrary, they were mostly of a plaintive cast and told a tale of grief and sorrow. In this most boisterous outburst of rapturous sentiment, there was ever a tinge of deep melancholy. (96-97)

These songs are part of the African Americans’ oral tradition, some of which are called spirituals, or “sorrow songs” as W.E.B. DuBois called them. Refer to the unit which details this further. These songs are so old, we don’t know the authors but they survive. The important thing to remember about this oral tradition and the resulting sacred songs of Blacks is that through the vehicle of orality and sacred songs, the African notions of The Divine, family, and community were translated. Some specific examples are: We Shall Overcome; Go Down Moses; Oh, Freedom; Steal Away; Nobody knows, the Trouble I’ve Seen; Free at Last; Down by the Riverside; Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, etc. The tradition of these sacred songs evolved into Gospel music, the Good news of Jesus Christ, celebrated in song. Today, Gospel music has exploded into popular music, Grammy Award categories, and then sung again in Black churches all over.

1. Transporting Faith in America, The Black Church

Through the faith expressed in sacred songs, Blacks in America adapted to the religions of their masters, principally, Christianity. This adaption occurred first as a requirement on many plantations; later then Blacks, Baptized Christian, founded their own churches such as the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, African Baptist, Church of God in Christ etc. In these churches from the start, Blacks express their African World View, honor and worship God, proscribe to the morals and creeds of Christianity, honor family and community.

The Black Church has historically been a source of hope and strength for the African American community. In 1990, the late

professor, C. Eric Lincoln co-authored, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* with Lawrence H. Mamiya. They described the, “seven major historic black denominations: the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church; the National Baptist Convention, USA., Incorporated (NBC); the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC),” as comprising “the black Church.”

Yet it is known that blacks were also members of predominantly white denominations such as the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, United Methodist and Roman Catholic churches. However, Lincoln and Mamiya chose to confine ‘the black Church,’ to “those independent, historic, and totally black controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787 and which constituted the core of black Christians.”

Since the publication of the Lincoln and Mamiya book, two new black denominations have developed: The National Missionary Baptist Convention (NMBC) and the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship (FGBCF). The FGBCF does not refer to itself as a denomination. (www.blackandchristian.com/blackchurch)

2. Evidence of Faith in Black Life

In *Trouble the Water*, Larry professes that he never thought that God would use a man like him (46:19 – 46:39 Chapter 6); he seems to be expressing that he feels privileged to have helped people, to be heroic, as though the goodness is its own reward.

In the language of the Church, one might conclude that Larry has “harkened to the voice of the Lord his God, and has done according to all God commanded of him” (KJV Deuteronomy 26:14). Also, in his statement, Larry alludes to a contemporary adaptation of that biblical teaching in the Gospel song, “Use Me,” especially the chorus. “Use Me” is written by Dewitt Jones, Kim Jones, and Ron Kenoly, and has been recorded and performed by the Motor City Mass Choir. We sing it regularly in my church, St. Raymond and St. Leo the Great Parish, in New Orleans. It is a beloved song about submitting to God, about allowing God to use us in ways beyond our imaginations, to touch us, to do good through us, to speak through us. “Use Me” is a powerful statement of the application of faith, of allowing the power of God to better us, to make us useful to ourselves and others.

“Use Me” Chorus:

*If You can use anything Lord, You can use me.
If You can use anything Lord, You can use me.
Take my hands, Lord, and my feet,
touch my heart, Lord, speak through me;
if You can use anything Lord, you can use me.*

Verse 1:

Lord, you called Moses from the wilderness,

*You put a rod in his hand,
You used him to lead Your people over to the promised land.
Lord, I'm willing to trust in You,
so take my life and use it too;
if You can use anything Lord, You can use me.*

Chorus

Verse 2:

*When David fought Goliath, the mighty giant fell,
he proved to his people that God was alive in Israel.
(Lord, I'm available to You)*

*(and I'm wanting to be used by You),
(yes, I'll say yes),
(You can use me, you can use me, oh);
(take my hands and my feet),
(touch my heart, speak through me, me).*

Verse 3:

*After the multitudes heard the words that Jesus said (oh yes),
He took two fish and five loaves and the multitude was fed.
(Lord, what I have may not be much),
but I know with You it can be (multiplied by Your touch);
if You can use anything Lord, You can use me.*

Ending:

*If You can use anything Lord, You can use me.
If You can use anything Lord, You can use me.
Take my hands and my feet,
touch my heart, speak through me,
speak through me, speak through me,
anything Lord. (Repeat Ending)*

Larry may or may not have been directly drawing on the message of that song, but his actions and spirit does. In the language of the Black Christian Church, Larry knows that he is connected to an unlimited God who blesses the faithful with supernatural possibilities; and for that he is a witness. He “didn’t know God could use a man like him.” Larry’s faith in God is rewarded with heroic ability; he saves many, but he gives God the Glory. He states that what happened was not his strength but the strength of God, and God rewards him.

For another example, within the film *Trouble the Water* there is no mention of a specific religion, yet one of the exclamations made early in the film by Kimberly Roberts about the impending natural hurricane Katrina, wondering about the possible fierceness of it, she says [9:52 Chapter 1]:

“God forbid, in the name of Jesus!”

This kind of exclamation is called a profession of faith in God, an acknowledgement of the power of God over all things, and it is at once a subordination of the human ego to the Supreme power of God. One only makes such proclamations of faith when one is trained in Christian beliefs. One learns this language because of a foundation in the Black Church. This proclamation is at once a

declaration of God’s power and a prayer request that “God forbid” such a terrible thing to occur. By adding the Holy Name of Jesus to the prayer, the person is calling on the power of that Holy Name to quell the storm, to get back, placing their “faith” in the power of God and in the Holy Name of God, Jesus. This kind of public exclamation is also called “praising God.” Christians believe that when we acknowledge God and praise Him for his goodness, that God loves a thankful heart. Black Christians say: “the Praises go up, and the Blessings rain down!”

This is where *Trouble the Water* crosses over into Faith as a cultural practice. With the foundation of Christian religious training, such proclamations are learned and practiced. Although still religious in nature, these praise statements now become part of the lore or Folklore of the people, Black people. Examine the list of praise (below) saying from the film. These are perfect examples of praising God in a cultural sense. Another example of such an explanation often said in New Orleans communities is:

“Lawd Today!”

The person saying “Lawd Today!” might be shocked, might be dismayed, might be laughing and slapping her thigh, but she is at once acknowledging God above all and calling on God in the present. This is an expression of faith in daily life. This expression is an old one and frequently appears in Black literature. “Lawd Today!” The expression is found in the early works of Black writers such as Langston Hughes; and in particular, it is the title of Richard Wright’s novel, first published in 1963, about a character named Jake Jackson who lives on the South side of Chicago.

C. Surviving Disaster through Faith

1. *Trouble the Water* experiences, Faith as foundation

The following excerpts from the film *Trouble the Water* are direct evidence of the active faith in practice daily as expressed by the film principles. Kim actively prays to God. She continually gives God the Praise and Glory. And she says it is her faith that gives her strength throughout the ordeal. These quotes can be used for the assignment and a class –discussion activity for this unit.

Kim’s prayer at the beginning of the film



Chapter 2, 9:58

KIMBERLY: Well, it's raining. The wind is blowing, it's picking up and it's very nasty. Look at the trees. They put it on the news that we should get out, but you got those people that just couldn't leave, like me. Not because we ain't want to but because we couldn't afford the luxury. I tried to get a rental, but I believe in Jesus, the Lord will send me through this one. Whenever the Lord allow it, I'll be able to tell the story.

August 28th 2005 on a nice beautiful Sunday. I ain't go to church, but I pray. 'The Lord please protect me and my family' cause people gonna die out here man. It's real man. It's like the Lord is upset, angry with New Orleans, and I don't blame him. We need Him to spare our life, man. That's the most important thing.



Chapter 3, 15:48

SCOTT: You see how high this shit is?

KIM: Oh Jesus! This is my face after just opening my back door! Oh, be with us Lord please.



Chapter 2, 11:50

KIM: I'm back now. I'm breathing and stuff, me and Scott. We're the last two Mohicans. Thank God. I ain't got nobody else to thank, thank God. Yeah. We straight.



Chapter 5, 31:33

BRIAN: Y'all be encouraged, y'all stay up. I don't know how to salute too good but, we thank y'all for being in the city of New Orleans, thank y'all for doing what y'all are doing, god bless y'all man. And I pray that y'all don't have to go back to Iraq. It's not our war.



Chapter 6, 46:18

LARRY: Well, I thank God for that day cause you know why?

KIM: Why?

LARRY: I never thought God could use a man like me.



Chapter 7, 54:00

BRIAN: They cutting the water back on!

WORKER: I'll take responsibility.

KIM: That's a blessing from God right there.

WORKER: I don't know how long they'll keep it on.

SCOTT: Good Samaritan, that's his name.

KIM: God bless you, man.

KIM: See there you go. When you trust in God. He'll still send miracles your way. Look at that, man. That's just wonderful. See? Real water. We ain't gonna waste none, though.



Chapter 8, 1:00:57

KIM: You get a chill just hearing this song being through what I've been through. God's going to trouble the water.

Gospel Song:

Don't you know that God's going to trouble the water.
I stepped in the water and the water was cold.

Don't you know that God's going to trouble the water.
It chilled my body but not my soul.

Don't you know that God's going to trouble the water.

KIM: God's going to trouble...

It's raining, and I got to get in the truck.

BRIAN: New beginning baby!

Wade in the water:

Wade in the water children.

SCOTT: I believe that freedom exists somewhere. There's just limitations on the freedom. That's what it is. This will be my first time out of the state of Louisiana.



Chapter 8, 1:04:09

BRIAN NOBLES: Thank God for some shelter. Somebody opened their hearts up for us to come stay with until we get our things situated. Just pray that, you know, God finishes leading us in the right way. Right areas, right people.



Chapter 9, 1:07:10

BRIAN NOBLES: Man, second day in Memphis, a new beginning. So many places we got to go to. We got to get these things together – about getting our houses, you know and getting everything straight. I feel great about this day. This is the day I've been waiting for.

CARL: Are you worried?

BRIAN: No, I'm not afraid. Fear is of the devil. I serve a true and living God.



Chapter 9, 1:08:45

KIM: Brian! You need me to be there, you need me to talk for you, you need me to sign anything or do anything you need me to do, just let me know Brian and I will patiently do it, bro. Say a scripture, I'm listening. Kick a scripture.

BRIAN: You kick one. I need encouragement.

KIM: I need encouragement. You got it now I need encouragement now, cause I feel like you down man.

BRIAN: I'm not down. I can't get down.

KIM: Well, just be patient man. And do me a favor just be thankful right now. If everything is going good for us, you know it's going good for you. You know what's up with us. Stop being down!

BRIAN: I'm just going in my secret closet.

KIM: Stop going in your secret closet around us cause you make us think that we ain't doing enough and when really we're maxed out. What if I just get down and be like just sad.

BRIAN: Then I'm gonna have to come in and encourage you.

KIM: There you go. You'd be like, "Man, what's wrong with you?" You're my fella. Just stay up, bro. And just, you know, stay positive. That'll make me feel better.

BRIAN: Alright. And the scripture you wanted, "Those who wait up on the Lord shall renew their strength."

These clips express an enduring faith of the principals in *Trouble the Water*. What does that mean?

Belief in God requires faith; that is, faith is a kind of letting go, of believing in the idea of God means giving into that belief, not for gain, but for the peace associated with faith. In addition, Christians and Jews are told by the Bible again, and again, that God rewards the faithful. For example, when the Jews ran from the oppression of Egypt under the direction of Moses, a prophet of old, Pharaoh's army was behind them getting close to recapturing them after 400 years of slavery. In front of them was the Red Sea. Because of Moses' faith in God, his prayers were answered, and God parted the Red Sea; as a result, the Jews escaped through two walls of water on either side, walls of water that crushed the following army. Such examples of God's reward for faith, what we call God's favor, are told repeatedly. In this way, people are reminded that God rewards His good and true believers. In another example, Jesus Christ fed a multitude from a little boy's lunch. God rewards the just and the faithful.

Kimberly, Scott, Brian, and Larry all explicitly express their faithfulness and acknowledge God's Goodness in what they accomplish. The result is that, with their survival, they all received what Pastor Joel Osteen calls "the fullness of the Blessing." For Kim and Scott, Larry, and Brian, their rescues are successful, their survived the hurricane, their lives are bettered.

Osteen explains this notion of "walking in the fullness of the Blessing," as an empowerment, a Divine intervention of God's favor. In this case, because of their faith, the film's subjects suggest they have become empowered by God to accomplish what they never thought possible, to save peoples' lives, to take them to safety, to express God's love in their daily lives by their actions. Also significant is the fact that they state that they accomplished their heroic actions not through their own strength but by God's favor, and that they all know and experienced the "hand of God" in their lives. They may have had no idea that their simple little home video would become a part of a documentary film, that it would impact the entire country as a unique record of the horror of the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, that a young rapper and self described street hustler from New Orleans would gain fame not only for her raps, but for her heroism. Christians believe that such a victory, such success, such prosperity is possible because of God's Goodness in their lives. They tapped into a greater measure of God's Blessings (Osteen).

2. Christian practice of love as cultural practice, as depicted in *Trouble the Water*

Kimberly and Scott Roberts opened their home, indeed their attic, sharing their water and food with neighbors and friends during Hurricane Katrina. Scott's friend Larry, a once-ascribed enemy, joins the group and saves people. Then Brian Nobles becomes a friend. They risk their own safety to save, share, and protect their neighbors. This is the center or crux of the moral tenants of Christianity, as taught by Moses, to love your neighbor as yourself.

Throughout *Trouble the Water*, the expressions of faith in God, the love expressed for neighbors, the sharing of minimal resources puts Kimberly, Scott, Brian, and Larry as prime examples of the Christian practice of love as a cultural practice. In the Letter of Saint James, mankind is urged to "Be doers of the word and not hearers only . . ." (22). This is instruction to live the love of God, not just speak it. Again, in the Letter of Saint James, he asks: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? . . . Faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (14, 17). In *Trouble the Water*; Kim, Scott, Brian, and Larry live their faith, praise God, and openly give thanks for all they have, all they were able to do, and all that God provides. As Black folks say, "they talk the talk, and walk the walk." This couple and their friends acted on their faith, doing their part, so God did His part. God did something great through these ordinary people. God helped them make a difference to the people around them. It didn't matter that they had little; God provided what they needed. They helped others, and God saw their kindness, their goodness, so they reaped a harvest for their faithfulness.

Christianity teaches that when people stay in faith, God rewards their efforts no matter what. In the Gospel of John 10:10, God tells his people that "I come that you might have life more abundantly." Kimberly, Scott, Brian, and Larry are proof that God's promise to His people is fulfilled. Black people, who believe in God, experience a peace and many blessings; as a result, there are many God warriors working daily in faith, in goodness, in integrity, in love. Most Blacks are hard working, good people, grounded in faith. Kimberly, Scott, Brian, and Larry honor God in their lives, and their lives become better as a result.

Conclusion:

A note must be mentioned about the blatant use of profanity, curse words, throughout the film. Just because the people in the film curse, something considered bad, does that make these "overwhelmingly good people" bad? No. What this may tell us is that God has a great sense of humor. Regardless of the cursing, the vile talk, the folk bravado, ultimately, the true faith and love of these 9th Ward New Orleans residents is the true test. They never tired of doing right; they remained faithful even during a "season of want." They planted seeds of faithfulness and reaped a harvest of blessings. The greater good is served. Neighbors share, shelter, and love one another even when our Federal Government doesn't even show up.

Definitions

African World View

Definition: Generally, African World View refers to the indigenous African religious beliefs, values, rituals and worldview, and the practices throughout the African Diaspora. **Context:** The ways in which African religions have informed global preservations of an African worldview, and the worldview's subsequent fusion with African, European, and particularly American Christianity will be emphasized in the ancient past, especially prior to the Middle Ages. Antiquities refers to art, the arts, objects, written works, even buildings from the ancient past.

Church

Definition: Church is a place of worship, a building for public worship. Anthropology's focus is man, and anthropologists use materials and methods to understand physical man and his culture. **Context:** "The word church comes from Middle English *chirche*, from Old English *cirice*, ultimately from Late Greek *kyriakon*, from Greek, neuter of *kyriakos* of the Lord, from *kyrios* lord, master; akin to Sanskrit *śūra*, hero, warrior.

Church also refers to "the 'clergy' or officialdom of a religious body;" it's sometimes and "often capitalized:" a body of religious believers: as a whole body of Christians; b: demonization: such as Presbyterian church; c: congregation: a specific type of church; it also refers to the clerical profession, for example, the church as a career. It is also a public divine worship; for example, people attend church on Sundays (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/church>).

Folk

Definition: The Folk refers to "any group of people who share at least one common factor," according to Alan Dundes, Folklorist. **Context:** Folklorist Elliott Oring further defines the "Folk" as common people or peasantry with a common denominator, remnants of an ancient people with common tales, sayings, songs, and customs that echo the life and spirit of their ancestral folk.

Popular Antiquities

Definition: Popular Antiquities is the first name for early lore collection.

World View

Definition: World View is a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world: a Christian World View, for example, revolves around the battle of good and evil.

Context: World View is expressed in a groups' Folklore. World View incorporates the dominant concerns, ethos, consciousness of a region or group; it is expressed in the Folklore which reinforces and validates their World View. It also includes the attitude, nature, feelings, values. For the Japanese people, it is Ancestors first. For Blacks, whether in Africa, the Caribbean, or America, it is God (or a belief in the Divine), Family, and Community.

Collector

Definition: The Collector is the Folklorist as she/he gathers or collects, documents, raw lore in interviews.

Informant

Definition: The Informant is the name used in Folklore for the Tradition Bearer, the one who passes on the customs of the people. Informant is often replaced with the term Tradition Bearer.

Proverb

Definition: A proverb is a statement passed on in a fixed form orally and conveys some truth.

Revelation

Definition: Revelation may be defined as the communication of some truth by God to a rational creature through means which are beyond the ordinary course of nature (newadvent.org).

Context: The truths revealed may be such as are otherwise inaccessible to the human mind — mysteries, which even when revealed, the intellect of man is incapable of fully penetrating. But Revelation is not restricted to these. God may see fit to employ supernatural means to affirm truths, the discovery of which is not per se beyond the powers of reason. The essence of Revelation lies in the fact that it is the direct speech of God to man (newadvent.org).

Rule of Faith

Definition: The word rule (Latin *regula*, Gr. *kanon*) means a standard by which something can be tested, and the rule of faith means something extrinsic to our faith, and serving as its norm or measure (newadvent.org).

Context: Since faith is Divine and infallible, the rule of faith must be also Divine and infallible; and since faith is supernatural assent to Divine truths upon Divine authority, the ultimate or remote rule of faith must be the truthfulness of God in revealing Himself. But since Divine revelation is contained in the written books and unwritten traditions (Vatican Council, I, ii), the Bible and Divine tradition must be the rule of our faith; since, however, these are only silent witnesses and cannot interpret themselves, they are commonly termed "proximate but inanimate rules of faith." Unless, then, the Bible and tradition are to be profitless, we must look for some proximate rule which shall be animate or living (newadvent.org).

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FAITH AND FOLK

ASSIGNMENT 1: COLLECTING FOLKLORE

Student Assignment (preparation):

Interview someone to collect (only one to share with class) a joke, a saying, a proverb [“haste makes waste”], chant, game, a rap. Write down the joke or saying using this content sheet. Be prepared to have the student discuss it and explain how the student came to collect it.

Student: _____ **School:** _____

Write or type the proverb, saying, joke etc. below.

Informant/Traditional Bearer’s information (explain that they must record all the information below):

Name: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____
Age: _____ Ethnic Background: _____ Religion: _____
Sex: _____ Signature (giving you permission to use): _____

Collector’s:

Name: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____
Age: _____ Ethnic Background: _____ Religion: _____
Sex: _____ Signature (giving you permission to use): _____

Attitudes understood in the joke or saying, rap or proverb [type or write it next]

FAITH AND FOLK

ASSIGNMENT 2: COLLECTING FOLKLORE

Student Assignment (preparation):

Interview someone to collect a dance they learned from another, or a recipe they learned from a sibling, friend, or parent. Write down the dance or recipe on this content sheet. Be prepared to have the student discuss it and explain how the student came to collect it.

Student: _____ **School:** _____

Write up: explain the dance steps (who does what how when) or recipe, etc. below.

Informant/Traditional Bearer's information:

Name: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____
Age: _____ Ethnic Background: _____ Religion: _____
Sex: _____ Signature (giving you permission to use): _____

Collector's:

Name: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____
Age: _____ Ethnic Background: _____ Religion: _____
Sex: _____ Signature (giving you permission to use): _____

What attitudes are understood in the dance or recipe [type or write it next]

FAITH AND FOLK

ASSIGNMENT 3: COLLECTING EXAMPLES OF FAITH

Student Assignment:

Interview someone to collect an expression of faith, or a sacred song (a favorite perhaps), a prayer, an example of a public expression of faith from a speech by a politician or the president, or even the mayor. Write up the expression of faith or prayer or song saying using this content sheet. Be prepared to have the student discuss it and explain how the student came to collect it.

Student: _____ **School:** _____

Write or type the expression of faith, saying, sacred song etc. below.

Informant/Traditional Bearer's information:

Name: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____
Age: _____ Ethnic Background: _____ Religion: _____
Sex: _____ Signature (giving you permission to use): _____

Collector's:

Name: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____
Age: _____ Ethnic Background: _____ Religion: _____
Sex: _____ Signature (giving you permission to use): _____

Attitudes understood in the expression of faith or sacred song, or public expression of faith (perhaps on a statue or plaque). [Type or write it next]