

ACTIVITY 8: DOJA, THE GYPSY FAIRY

Overview of the activity

‘Doja, the Gypsy Fairy’ is an episode from the Romani television series *Gypsy Tales*. It explores the ‘bitter fate’ motif of wandering, rather than climbing. The animated story stimulated positive representations of Romani communities and their traditions. Based on the story, participants will reflect on the topic of Roma culture and heritage.

Objectives

- Learn about and have a better understanding of Roma culture and heritage.
- Step into the shoes of Roma people and look at the world from their perspective (integrating their values and mindset).

Duration (in minutes)

45 minutes

Min/max number of participants

- Recommended: 12
- Minimum: 3
- Maximum: no limit

Room/space requirements

An open space is needed, indoors or outdoors.

Materials needed

- List of questions
- Computer and projector to show the video

Instructions

1. In order to better understand the activity and the video, there is some background information about the animation, some of which could be shared with the group:
 - The story of the *Cigánymesék /Gypsy Tales* cartoon series starts in 2013. It had the objective of sharing Romani folk traditions and combining them with contemporary Roma cultural values. The series includes six episodes: 'The Gypsy Romani Woman and the Devil' (2014); 'Kalo' (2015); 'Doja, the Gypsy Fairy' ('Doja a Cigánytündér', 2015); 'How Was Man Created' (2017); 'The Fiery Red Snake' (2017); and 'The Story of the Sun and the Moon' (2017).
 - The animation tells the story of the Roma people, who dream about their own land. One day a fairy, called Doja, gracefully strolls down a rainbow to be with her community and help them. Clinging to her long, jet-black hair, they fly with her to a wondrous island, where they can build the Romani land in freedom and live happily in peace. But then, one day, terrible monsters called *szülláks* attack the village.
 - In creating the animated short movies, the director cooperated each time with the same Roma artists who remain close to their Romani roots: Magda Szécsi, a Romani writer and illustrator; Teréz Orsós, a Romani painter; József Oláh, a musician and frontman of the band Parno Graszt; and Erika Varga, a fashion designer. This innovation allowed the artists to represent Romani myths and oral heritage while also illustrating tradition using contemporary art forms and their storytelling skills, fusing drawings, paintings and traditional music.
2. Once you have introduced the activity and the context of the *Gypsy Tales* (in whatever depth you prefer), you should watch the episode 'Doja, the Gypsy Fairy':



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://opentextbooks.rug.nl/inclusiveheritageeducation/?p=165>

3. Once the video is over, the group should consider these questions:

What did you like about this story? What does it convey to you?

Let's explore what it reveals about the gypsy people and their cultural background and heritage

- *What is their lifestyle like?*
- *What values are apparent in the tale? Do not limit yourself to the story itself, but also think about the visuals and the background music.*
- *What are the external circumstances like?*
- *What might the monsters, the szülláks, represent from the real world?*

4. The discussion first takes place in small groups (the number will depend on the total number of participants in the activity) and then the ideas should be shared in the larger group (open discussion).

5. Participants are then invited to create (in small groups or altogether) a list of cultural heritage elements of the Roma people based on this tale. Here are some helpful questions:

What else would you add?

What do you think is important?

6. Final round: Open discussion with the participants:

What items from the heritage list are familiar to you or also true to you?

Evaluation

Debriefing questions and evaluation are indicated in the main instructions. You can encourage further debate by asking participants if the story of Doja reminds them of a similar story in their own cultures.

Questions for self-reflection in the teaching practice

Do you have cultural ties to Roma heritage? If so, how? Up to now, the narratives you are familiar with refer to Roma heritage as 'imported' or external to European culture. Have you been presented with other points of view regarding the way Roma culture has been present in Europe throughout the centuries? Currently, Roma communities must fight off negative stereotypes about their culture and their heritage. Do you feel that this might have an effect on the participants or on yourself?