

Folktales from Brazil

Every culture has collections of folktales. Folktales are stories that come from the lives and imaginations of ordinary people, or folk. These stories are in the oral tradition, meaning that people tell them to each other out loud rather than reading them in written form. Folktales often have elements of fantasy such as anthropomorphism, or ascribing human traits to things that are not human. In some cases, folktales provide an origin story for certain elements of daily life, like where starfish come from, for example. Religion, dieties, and spiritual beliefs are also common references in folktales. For instance, folktales in Brazil may reference themes of Christianity, since it is the most widely practiced religion in the country.

In Brazil, there is a folktale called “A lenda da estrela–do-mar,” or “The legend of the starfish.” Stars and starfish are celestial symbols representing divine love and inspiration. This particular folktale recounts the long-distance relationship shared between a grain of sand from the beaches of Brazil and a star in the night sky and how God eventually brought them closer together.

The Legend of the Starfish

The author of this version is Passos, Lucina M.M.

A little grain of sand from the sea looked up at the sky on a starry night. He saw a very small and delicate star and fell in love with it.

The grain of sand was dreamer and poet. He made verses and said words so beautiful that the star was also in love.

The distance between the sky and the sea was immense, so the grain and the star would have to live forever apart. But they loved to talk so much and had so many secrets to tell one another that they asked God to stay together.

God then turned the star of the sky into a starfish, and ever since then the little grain of sand and the starfish have never parted again.



Purple and Orange Starfish on the Beach.
Photo by [Mark Walz](#) (CC BY 2.0)

Suggested Activities

For libraries or individual classrooms, explore folktales in addition to viewing Paulo Padilha e Bando’s videos. The following are prompts to help inspire activity-based learning.

- Can you tell your own original origin-story folktale?
- What are some folktales you know from your culture? From your family?
- Make a starfish with construction paper, glue, paint, and glitter. Click [here](#) for other crafting ideas.
- Click [here](#) to learn how to make sand art in a bottle.