



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1998 Volume II: Cultures and Their Myths

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## **The Native American Myths: Creation to Death**

Curriculum Unit 98.02.02  
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The topic of this unit is Native American Myths: Creation to Death. It will span over a three month period within a fourth grade classroom setting. It can be tailored to accommodate a third grade class or elaborated upon to be appropriate for a fifth grade class. The lessons will be taught in a kinesthetic, auditory and visual mode in order to reach the three different learning styles. The purpose of this unit is to make children aware of the myths that were told by the Native American Indians and the role that myths played in their life.

### **INTRODUCTION**

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The Indians did not necessarily distinguish between the animate and inanimate. Everything embodied life and was considered to be in a conscious state of being. The plants, animals, herbs and all non-living parts of their ecosystem were in essence a human life form. Every object that sprang from their creativity was in effect in possession of life. Every sound and movement made by an inanimate object was synonymous with those that are demonstrated by a human being. The Indian felt that everything in existence co-existed and was owned by no one. An example of this philosophy is the speech made by Chief Seattle of the Northwest Indians. Chief Seattle's words were originally translated by Dr. Henry A. Smith and have been rewritten by others through the century. This message was also brought to a larger audience with the appearance of Joseph Campbell on Bill Moyers' PBS series and in his book "The Power of the Myth". Another adaptation was transcribed by Susan Jeffers in her book "Brother Eagle, Sister Eagle"(1). I found the following adaptation in a bookstore in Taos, New Mexico. Credit is given to the University of Washington for the adaptation. It goes as follows.

#### **How Can You Buy Or Sell The Earth?**

Chief Seattle and Chief of the Squamish Duwamish Indians as in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. In 1854 the United States Government offered to buy 2 million acres of Indian land in the Northwest region. During this time the government had been taking land from the Indians and forcing them to live on smaller areas of land called reservations. Chief Seattle replied to President Franklin Pierce very eloquently. It has been described as the most beautiful and prophetic statement on the environment ever made. His speech demonstrated many of the differences between the way Native Americans and whites regarded the world in which they live. Below is this memorable speech.

The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. The Great Chief also send us words

of friendship and goodwill. This is kind of him, since we know he has little need of our friendship in return.

How can we buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is so strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and every humming insect is holy in the memory of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man. So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us.

This we know: all things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. But we will consider your offer to go to the reservation you have for my people. We will live apart and live in peace.

One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover our God is the same God. You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot.

He is the God of man; and his compassion is equal for the red man and the white. The earth is precious to Him and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Continue to contaminate your land, and you will one day suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand what will happen when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, and the view of the ripe hills is blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. And what is it to say good-bye to the swift pony and the hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival. So we will consider your offer to buy the land.

If we agree, it will be to secure the reservation you have promised. There, perhaps, we may live out our brief days as we wish. When the last red man has vanished from the earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So, if we sell our land, love it as we have loved it. Care for it as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And preserve it for your children, and love it ... as God loves us all. One thing we know. Our God is the same God. This earth is precious to Him. Even the white man cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be Brothers after all.

## **We shall see...(2)**

After reading the speech by Chief Seattle pass out a copy to each student and discuss. See Lesson Plan that follows:

### **Lesson Plan #1**

Objective:

To read and comprehend the speech made by Chief Seattle.

Skills:

Strengthen listening skills  
Oral reading fluency  
Strengthen reading comprehension  
Vocabulary development

Procedure:

Have children locate the following words in Chief Seattle's speech and define word in its context.

Vocabulary:

Northwest	dominion	
eloquently	slaughtered	
prophetic	thicket	
demonstrated	vanished	
goodwill	prairie	
sap		exempt
strand		destiny
perishing		

Post-Reading Discussion Questions:

1. If Chief Seattle was making this speech today, who would he be referring to as the Great Chief in Washington?
2. In paragraph 4, Chief Seattle says, "Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it." What does he mean?
3. Read paragraph 7. Where does Chief Seattle feel that the "spirits of his people" will always be held? What does he mean?
4. Chief Seattle feels that the Indian and the white man have someone in common. Who is it? Chief Seattle was very concerned about the future of the environment. If he was alive today
5. and was writing this speech, what do you think he would say about the condition of the environment as it is today?
6. Why do you think he agreed to sell the land?

## **BELIEFS**

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The Native American Indian did not generally possess a belief in one particular religion. He did, however, hold on to certain religious beliefs that were widespread among many different tribes. These tribes had a guardian spirit, shamans, prophets and many different types of ceremonies. It is important to understand what the Indian believe in, in order to understand the importance of the mythological characters that played such an important role in his life.

Most of the Indians believed that one could gain the spirit power through certain people. A guardian spirit was thought of as being one way of reaching the powerful spirit world. He was regarded as being a personal spiritual helper who could guide a person through the hardships of life. It was not uncommon for an Indian to have more than one guardian spirit. Different guardian spirits were used for different needs. Another intermediary with the gods was known as the shaman or medicine man.

The spirit world could also be reached with the help of the shaman. Because his tasks included curing the sick he was regarded as the medicine man. The Indian believed that the shaman also had close contact with the spiritual world. Not everyone possessed the abilities to be a shaman. Usually the shaman had, sometime early in his youth, demonstrated some ability for this profession. His job was dangerous; for if it was a prominent or powerful Indian who became ill, and was not cured, the medicine man might be killed for failure to cure the afflicted person. While a shaman usually helped one sick person at a time, a priest often worked with several people at one time.

The priest usually held a public ceremony that was for an entire Indian group. This ceremony was held in one particular place that was regarded as sacred. His training for this type of service was involved and regarded very formal and extensive. If a priest failed to produce a good harvest or plentiful rainfall, retribution by the members of the tribe was not considered unusual.

The prophets did not come into existence until the people from Europe began to settle in Indian territory. The prophets foresaw that the Indians were taking on the habits of the white man, especially the consumption of liquor. They predicted the future of the Indian way of life in a dismal fashion. The prophets tried to persuade the Indians to return to their traditional way of life. They also felt it was important that the white man and the Native American Indian live peacefully and separately. The story of Hiawatha carries across to the reader this idea of peaceful co-existence (3).

## **THE MYTH**

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The myth was an integral part of the daily life of the American Indian. These stories were handed down from one generation to the next. They were the foundation for the many various ceremonies that were held. They included stories about the origin of the world, and also its components, living and non-living. These people believed that good things would happen to them if they believed in the humanness of all things living and non-living. Originally their stories would be enhanced by miming and theatrics. The Indian played the part of the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth and water. But eventually the theatrics waned and the stories became more elaborate and most likely changed through the centuries of storytelling.

The Indians of South America and Mexico lived in very large communities of people, often totaling several thousand inhabitants. Their myths were very developed stories and preserved through the generations. The Native American Indian, however, did not live in such large communities. Their tribes were scattered an over the continent and did not form any one large civilization. As a result, their mythologies were not as well developed as the Mexican or South American Indian's mythologies. The beliefs were the same among the tribes although the stories themselves differed by the characters that they used (4). The myths that will follow deal with creation, earth, the moon, corn, the first man and woman, the first horses and death. They come from different parts of the North American continent. All have been summarized from the sources given. Each myth will be followed by discussion questions which can be elaborated upon depending on the academic level of the students.

After the class learns about the philosophy of the Native American Indian they will listen to a different myth read to them every day. The unit win open with two creation myths from two different parts of the country. The first myth from the Northeast woodland area goes as follows.

## CREATION OF THE WORLD

### THE EARTH ON TURTLE'S BACK

#### NORTHEAST WOODLANDS - ONONDAGA TRIBE

In the beginning of the earth there was no land, just water. Birds and animals were just swimming around never having any land to rest upon. Skyland was way above this and in Skyland there was a Great Tree that was loaded with seeds. It was a very beautiful tree. It had only four large white roots that pointed north, south, east, and west. And from the branches of this beautiful Great Tree grew beautiful flowers and many kinds of fruit.

In the Skyland lived a young pregnant girl and her husband, who was the Chief of Skyland. The wife had a dream one night that the Great Tree became uprooted. Her husband, upon hearing the story wanted the tree uprooted. He felt that the dream was very powerful and should come true. After his helpers were unsuccessful at uprooting the tree he tried. Finally and with great effort the Great Tree tore away from the Sky and left a big hole in the Sky. The pregnant wife bent down to see what was through the hole. All she saw was glimmering water. She stretched and stretched, holding on to one of the branches. She lost her balance and fell through the hole.

The animals and birds saw her coming down and knew they had to help her. They noticed that she didn't have webbed feet and wouldn't be able to swim. There was also no earth for her to land on. So the animals, knowing that there was earth somewhere under the water decided to bring the earth up. The Duck, the Beaver and the Loon all tried but they were not able to do it. It was the tiny Muskrat, who swam so deep that he felt as though his lungs were going to burst, that brought up the earth. Two Swans had flown up to the pregnant wife and let her rest between their large wings while the other animals searched for someplace to put the Earth. A Great Turtle from the depths of the water, seeing the problem swam up and let the tiny Muskrat land on his back. The Earth grew and grew and then the two Swans let the wife rest on the Great Turtle's back. When the wife landed on the Earth, she opened her hand and gently the seeds from the Great Tree fell to the ground. And from those seeds grew the tress and the grass. Life on Earth had now begun (5).

The following questions could be used for discussion.

1. Why do you think the King's wife looked through the hole in the sky? (Curiosity).  
When the animals and birds saw the girl coming down they knew they had to help her because she had a disability and couldn't swim. What was the disability? (She didn't have webbed feet).
2. How could you help a person with disabilities? 3. How does this myth teach us about cooperation? (Everyone worked together to solve a problem).

The next myth comes from the Navajo Indians in the Southwest area. This is a different view of the creation of the earth from the Onondaga Indians. While the Onondaga saw the world being created from a hole in the sky, the Navajos saw it being created from a hole below. This myth is as follows.

## CREATION MYTH

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### FOUR WORLDS: THE DINE (NAVAJO) STORY OF CREATION

#### SOUTHWEST- NAVAJO TRIBE

There was once a First World below the World as we know it. Everything was black and it had in it only six beings. They were First Man, the Son of Night and the Blue Sky over Sunset; First Woman, the Daughter of Day Break and the Yellow Sky of Sunset; Salt Woman; Fire God; Coyote and Begochiddy. Begochiddy had blue eyes and golden hair and was both man and woman.

Begochiddy made the plants because there were none. Then a white mountain was made to the east, a blue one to the south, a yellow one to the west and to the north a black mountain. Then Begochiddy made the insects and the ants. Fire God became very jealous and began to bum everything that was made. Begochiddy told First Man to gather everything up that was made and they went to the red mountain that Begochiddy made in the center of the earth. There Begochiddy created the Big Reed that was hollow. They all got inside and up and up it grew until it reached the Second World. The color of Second World was blue. In it Begochiddy created plants, clouds and mountains. In Second World there were also Swallow People and Cat People. Everyone was happy for a time but then things started going wrong. Again Begochiddy planted Big Reed. They all got inside and up and up it grew until it reached Third World which was yellow. The mountains gave the light because there was not a moon or stars. Begochiddy made rivers, water animals, trees, birds and lightening. Then all kinds of human beings were created. Everyone spoke the same language and everyone was happy. All of a sudden, red streaks went across the sky and they represented disease that would come to the people through evil magic. They were put there by First Man.

After a while, Coyote went to Begochiddy and told how unhappy everyone was and how the men and women were fighting each other. Begochiddy separated them by a river. But soon they began to miss each other. Begochiddy told them that they could live together but if there was any more fighting a great flood would come and destroy the Third World.

Coyote was roaming around Third World and heard Salt Woman say that she had seen a baby with long black hair in the river. Coyote quickly went to the river, got the baby, hid it under his coat and told no one. Four days later a black storm came from the east and a great noise was heard around Third World. Then, from the west came a yellow storm, and a white one came from the north. Begochiddy gathered all things that were made. Big Reed again was planted. They put in all things that were made and all human beings. Again it

began to grow up away from the rising waters.

This time there was a problem with Big Reed. It stopped growing before it reached Fourth World, The Spider People tried to spin a web that would connect it to Fourth World. That didn't work. The Ant People tried to dig into Fourth World but that didn't work because the World was too hard. Finally, the Locust with his hard head broke through and everyone and everything climbed through the hole that he had made. Begochiddy saw water all around and saw Four Great Powers. When Begochiddy waved to them they let the water recede. Begochiddy went back and told them that the water receded but that they needed someone to walk up there to see if it was dry enough. The Badger offered to go. When he walked on Fourth World his feet became black with mud and that is how he got black feet. Begochiddy knew that the Fourth World needed to be dried out. So the winds, the cyclones and the dust devils were called upon. They swirled around and around and dried up the Fourth World. All created things and people followed. When Begochiddy looked down to the Third World and saw the water still rising a question came into mind. Who had angered the Water Monster so? Coyote tightened the blanket around him and Begochiddy knew it was he. He was told to give the Water Monster back the baby so the waters would recede.

Now Begochiddy prepared the Fourth World. Everything was placed in order: The mountains, the plants, the animals, the Sun, the Moon and the Stars were placed in the Sky. Fire God wanted to keep the fire all to himself but Coyote stole some of it. He gave it to the people to cook with and to keep them warm. Begochiddy gave the people different languages and scattered them around the world. They also learned from Begochiddy the right way to live, give thanks, and care for the fruits of the Earth.

It was at this time that Changing Woman came to be. She helped all people, became their friend and destroyed monsters that threatened the people. This is how the Fourth World came to be. But just as the other worlds were destroyed so will this world if people did not live a proper life. That is what the Navajo say to this day '.

Cultural differences most likely led to the differences in the above two myths. So many tribes began as a result of breaking away from a regional tribe. They often traveled and established their own land areas. However, they brought with them the idea of the myth and often created their own myth or altered what they already had. In the above two myths, creation took place either from a hole in the sky or from a hole in the earth.

The following questions could be used for discussion.

- The Fire God was 'jealous and started to bum everything that Begochiddy made in the First
1. World. Begochiddy decided to gather all living things and go to the Second World. Is there another way that Begochiddy could have handled the situation?
  2. First Man was good and helped Begochiddy prepare to leave the First World. Why do you think he brought disease to the Second World?
  3. Coyote stole fire from the Fire God to give to the people to cook with and keep them warm. Do you think Coyote had the right to steal to help the people? Why or why not?
  4. Begochiddy and Changing Woman were good. Which character do you think was more important to the people? Explain.

## Lesson #2

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The myth, "Four Worlds: The Dine Story of Creation", lends itself to classroom participation. Children will be able to tell the story through mime and artwork. There are also a sufficient amount of parts so that a large group of children could participate in this activity.

Objective:

To dramatize the myth, "Four Worlds: The Dine Story of Creation"

To teach the moral: As other worlds have been destroyed, so too will this one if people do not live a proper life.

Skills:

Comprehension                      Organizational skills Oral speaking  
Listening comprehension Creativity                      Teamwork

Characters:

Living Non-Living

Narrator	Cat People	4 Worlds	Trees
First Man	Baby	Reed	Lightning
First Woman	Spider	Clouds	Sun
Salt Woman	Ant	Mountains	Moon
Fire God	Locust	Red streaks	Stars
Coyote	Badger	Rivers	Fire
Begochiddy	Water Monster	Drum	Storms - Yellow, White, Black
Swallow	Changing Woman		
People			

Materials:

To represent the characters in the living parts the student could dress in costume or create the



face of the character on a white paper dish that is secured around his head like a mask. The non-living parts can be represented by various forms of artwork;

Some ideas follow.

4 Worlds; (4) 24 in. circles cut from construction paper in the appropriate color.

Reed; 2 or 3 wrapping paper tubes put together, or a broom handle. Clouds- cotton balls glued on oaktag or poster board to form cloud shape.

Mountains, trees; construction paper

Lightning, Sun, Moon, Stars, Fire; poster board in appropriate color. Rivers and storms; secure 4 strips of crepe paper, each 6 ft long, to a paper towel tube (like a flag) and wave.

Method:

The narrator and characters will be on stage. The narrator will read the myth and as each character is mentioned, the student who represents that character will present himself

## **EARTH MYTH**

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TUNKA-SHILA, GRANDFATHER ROCK

GREAT PLAINS-SIOUX TRIBE

In the beginning everything existed only in spirit form and these spirits moved around hoping to find a place where they could stay and show themselves. When they reached the Sun they knew it was too hot. Finally they came upon Earth, but it was covered with water and there were no life forms. Suddenly a Great Burning Rock broke the surface of the water and it began to dry out the land. This Rock is called Tunka-Shila, "Grandfather Rock" because it is the oldest of all the rocks. Rocks must be respected because of this.(7)

The following questions could be used for discussion.

1. What made the Great Burning Rock break the surface of the water?
2. Is there a rock on this earth that is known as Grandfather Rock? If you wanted to see it, could you? Research this question.

3. What values do rocks have in our life? Why are they important to us?
4. What does this myth teach you about respecting the world that we live in?

From the Kalispel Indians in Idaho there is a myth about the moon and how it came to be.

## MOON MYTH

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### IDAHO-KALISPEL INDIANS

#### HOW COYOTE WAS THE MOON

In the beginning there was no moon. People were very unhappy that they had to always be in the dark. They asked Yellow Fox to be the Moon. He was thrilled but he shone so brightly in the sky that at night everything became hot. The people decided to take him down and they asked Coyote to take his place. Well, Coyote was ecstatic because he would be able to see everything that was going on down on Earth. For a while, everyone was happy, especially the nosy Coyote. But he would always yell out when someone was doing something wrong and everyone would hear him. He would tell when people were stealing meat from the drying racks or cheating at cards. Finally, all the people who wanted to do things secretly got together and decided to take Coyote out of the Sky. Someone else became the Moon. So far, the Moon is doing what the Moon should do shine brightly. Any everyone is happy.(8)

The following questions could be used for discussion.

1. Do you think Coyote took advantage of a wonderful opportunity?
2. If Coyote wanted to continue to be the Moon, what should he have done differently?
3. Coyote would squeal on the people who were doing bad things. Do you think he should have done that? Explain your reasons.
4. If you were Coyote and had the responsibility of being the moon what would you do to be a good moon?
5. What is our responsibility toward the people we live with when we see people selling drugs or stealing?
6. What does this myth mean to you? What lessons have you learned?

In North Carolina the Cherokee Indians tell the myth about the first corn and how it came to be.

## PLANT MYTH

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### THE COMING OF THE CORN

#### NORTH CAROLINA-CHEROKEE INDIANS

Many years ago there was an old woman who lived happily with her grandson until the boy turned seven years old. On his birthday she gave him a bow and arrow with which to hunt. On his first expedition he came back with a small bird. She was very proud of him and told him so. The Grandmother went out to her storeroom behind the lodge in which they lived. She soon came back with corn in a basket. She made a delicious soup with the corn and the little bird. Everyday that the boy brought home the fruits of his hunt his grandmother would go to the storehouse and bring back the corn to make the meal. The boy became very curious and decided to follow her. He watched her as she stood in front of her basket and rubbed her hand along the side of her body. As she did this the corn filled the basket. He became afraid and thought that she might be a witch. He hurriedly returned to the lodge. When the Grandmother came in she knew that he had seen what she had done. She told him that because of this she must die and leave him. She would tell him what to do so that there would always be food for their people. She said, "When I die, go to the south side of the lodge and clear the Earth until it is completely bare. Then drag my body along the Earth seven times and bury me in the ground." The boy did as he was told. He dragged her body over the Earth and wherever a drop of her blood fell to the ground a small plant would appear. He kept the ground cleared around each plant and soon they grew very tall with long tassels of silk at the top which reminded him of his Grandmother's long hair. Eventually ears of corn grew and his Grandmother's promise came true. Even though the Grandmother has passed from this Earth she is still present as the corn plant to feed her people.(9)

The following questions could be used for discussion.

1. The Grandmother was very close to her grandson. On his seventh birthday she gave him a bow and arrow so that he could hunt. How do you think they got their food before this?
2. The boy became frightened when he saw how his grandmother got the corn. If he asked her about it, do you think she would have told him? Why or why not?
3. The boy thought his grandmother was a witch because of the magic that she used. He did not understand what was happening. Sometimes we perceive a situation in a certain way because we do not know enough about it. Have you ever been in a situation in which people thought badly of you? Did you ever misjudge someone because you did not know all the facts?
4. What lesson did you learn from this myth?

The Pima Indians of the Southwest region have passed down the myth explaining how the first man and woman came to be in the myth entitled "Man and Woman Story".

## **THE FIRST MAN AND WOMAN**

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### MAN AND WOMAN STORY

#### SOUTHWEST-PIMA INDIANS

Earthmaker had been wandering around and going nowhere. He was hot and dirty. When he rubbed the sweat and dust from his brow he made a very small ball. The ball, which was held in the palm of his hand, tipped over 3 times. Finally, it stopped and Earth was created. Earthmaker saw that no one was on Earth, so after he

rubbed his chest, he made 2 little dolls with the dirt which rubbed off his chest. He carefully laid them upon the Earth. This was the creation of the first Man and Woman. They increased in numbers until they filled the Earth. They were perfect people and there was never any sickness or death. But eventually, the Earth became too crowded and they began to fight with each other. Many died in battle.

The following questions could be used for discussion.

1. Sometimes we need to be alone and we are happy. Sometimes we are alone and feel very lonely. Do you think Earthmaker was lonely?
2. When do you like to be alone and when do you feel lonely?
3. How do you think Earthmaker felt when he saw people fighting?
4. What could Earthmaker have done when he saw the people fighting? What could you do when you see your friends fighting?
5. What does this myth teach you?

One of the major misconceptions about the Indians was that they were exclusively a race of horsemen. The Indians of the Southwest region were the Indians that were mounted on horses. And in this region, the Navajo, Apache and Comanche were tribes regarded as being certainly mounted. The Comanche were a horse-oriented tribe of the type that was depicted in movies from Hollywood. The Apache were regarded as very poor horsemen. They enjoyed eating them as much as riding them and they usually fought their battles on foot. The Navajo were a pacific people. They employed their ponies for tending sheep and cattle as they were pastoralists and herdsmen. These three tribes were a very small part of the 600 tribes of Indians that lived in the North American continent. For 20,000 years they survived without the horse. It was only after the white man introduced the horse to the Indian that they began to use them in any sense. (1) How the horse actually came into existence is told through the myth Sky Dogs. The Blackfeet Indians are given the credit for this myth. When the horses first appeared to the Blackfeet people, they thought the strange animals were dogs sent as a gift from the sky from Old Man, creator of all things. The storyteller of this myth is He-Who-Loves-Horses.

## THE FIRST HORSES

### SKY DOGS

### PLAINS-BLACKFEET

A long, long time ago we had to walk and walk from sky to sky, from camp to camp. Our dogs carried our rawhide bags and pulled our travois sleds. We walked so much that we wore out many moccasins going across the plains.

AR of a sudden, one day, coming from Old Man's sleeping room, west of the mountains, we saw some strange looking beasts. They were as big as elk and they had tails of straw. Lying across the backs of these beasts were two Kutani men. One beast was pulling a travois sled. We became afraid because we did not understand.

My best friend, Jumps-Over-the-Water hid behind his mother's skirt. The bravest of all of us known as Running Bear, ran behind the nearest tipi to hide. I was so frightened I could not move. I was away from the safety of my father's tipi. The men in our tribe yelled that we were not to be afraid - that we were the mighty Piegans

who took the land sway from the Kutani.

As I looked around I saw that they were afraid. They all had big eyes and four of them had their hunting bows aimed.

Then our chief Long Arrow laughed. He said, "These are from Old Man. They are a gift like the elk, antelope, buffalo and bighorn sheep they are called Sky Dogs".

Now Long Arrow was very smart because he had walked around the Earth seven times from the Porcupine Hills down to the mouth of the Yellowstone. Everyone became quiet and trusted his knowledge. We waited for the Sky Dogs to reach our camp. We waited bravely with our sacred herb, nawak'osis, ready for smoking. When they reached our camp we saw that there were two Kutani men and a Kutani woman in the travois sled. We took the three ill Kutani in but the medicine man could do nothing for the men. They died before they could tell us about the Sky Dogs and how they came to be from Old Man.

We took care of the beasts. We fed them dried meat as we fed our dogs. We threw sticks to make them fetch. One Sky Dog ran away. Some say he went back to Old Man. Some say that the coyote got him. The two that stayed showed us they like to eat grass.

Running Bear came sway from his tipi and Jumps-Over-the-Water left his mother's skirt. No one was afraid anymore.

I went up to the smallest Sky Dog. I touched him gently from hoof to mane. I felt his soft, warm skin. He did not flicker. He did not move. I pressed my face close against his face. He still did not move. Long Arrow smiled at me and gave me the name- He-Who-Loves-Horses.

The Kutani woman grew well, married my father and we lived in the tipi as a family. She sang to us the story of the Sky Dogs and her people. I learned how to mount and to comb the mane with a bone comb. And I learned how to ride into battle.

From this I earned a place in the Council of Warriors.(12)

The following questions could be used for discussion.

- When the horses first appeared everyone became frightened. The people were afraid because
1. they had never seen horses before. Do you think that they should have aimed their bows and arrows at them?
  2. When you are afraid of something new what do you do?
  3. If you were entering a new school would you be afraid? How would you handle it?
  4. When a new student enters your classroom are you afraid of him? If so, how would you change your feeling of fear?
  5. Why was Long Arrow an important person?
  6. Who is an important person in your life? Explain.

## Lesson Plan #3

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### Expository Writing

The Blackfeet Indians have passed down the myth “Sky Dogs” which recounts how horses came to be in the life of the Blackfeet Indians. An expository writing prompt will be employed to explain how horses came to these people. After reading and discussing this myth review the prerequisites for expository writing.(13)

Expository writing is writing that informs or explains a topic to a reader. Begin by following these foundational steps.

1. Consider your topic: what are the facts that you want to cover.
2. Consider your purpose: what is your reason for writing
3. Consider your audience: who will read or listen to your writing.
4. Gathering information: select the material or ideas that you want to include in your writing.
5. Elaboration: add details to make your writing more interesting.

Each writing will follow the M6DF pattern which is described below.

1. Each writing exercise shall be composed of 5 paragraphs.
2. Each paragraph shall have a MAIN IDEA.
3. Each paragraph shall have 6 sentences.
4. Review each paragraph and add in DETAILS.
5. The last sentence in each paragraph should express some FEELING.

The prompt should read as follows:

You are a horse appearing for the first time on Earth and to beings that you have never seen before. You regard these h as being very odd and you are confused as to what they look like, how they sound and what they do. Write to a horse friend in your homeland about these people. Describe three things about them that you find very different, amusing or frightening.

Having the children write from the point of view of the horse will expose them to the literary term personification. It will help them to understand how the Indian gave humanness to all living things.

## Lesson Plan #4

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Have available to students copies or books of all myths read. Also have available other myths on their reading comprehension level. Discuss with them a diamonte poem.

Objective:

To read a myth and develop a diamonte poem.

To use noun, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives where needed.

To place completed diamonte poems in learning center when completed.

Procedure:

1. Explain that a diamonte poem is written in the shape of a diamond.
2. The outside of the poem may have designs that are representative of the Indian tribe that their chosen myth comes from.
3. Using the guideline below create a diamonte poem about a character in the myth they chose. The example shown below is from "Four Worlds: The Dine (Navajo) Story of Creation.

Line 1: one word (noun or pronoun)

Line 2: two words (adjectives describing line 1)

Line 3: three words ("-ing" verbs showing action related to line 1)

Line 4: four words (nouns, the first two relating to line 1, the last two to line 7)

Line 5: three words ("-ing" verbs showing action related to line 7)

Line 6: two words (adjectives describing line 7)

Line 7: one word (a noun or pronoun, often the opposite of the word in line 1)

1. She

1. Pregnant Curious

2. Grabbing                      Looking - Falling

- 4, Wife - Queen - Husband King
5. Helping Satisfying Loving
6. Leader Husband
7. He

## DEATH MYTH

### THE ORIGIN OF DEATH

#### PLAINS-CHEYENNE INDIANS

When the world was created Death did not occur. The Earth became so overcrowded that eventually there wasn't room for any more beings. The Chiefs held Council in the hope that they could resolve the problem. One man felt that it would be advantageous if some people died, went away for a while, and then returned. Coyote felt this plan would not work. Eventually when all the people came back from the dead there would not be enough food. All the others could not see the merit in Coyote's thinking. They did not want their relatives to be gone forever. This, they said, would only cause unhappiness in the World. They all agreed with the first speaker and Coyote stood alone with his plan. So the medicine man built a grass house that faced the east. When someone died he would be placed in the house. The medicine man would sing a song calling the spirit of the dead to the house where the dead person was laid out to rest. Then, when the spirit came, to the happiness of all the people, the dead person would become alive. When it happened that the first person died he was laid to rest in the house and the medicine man summoned the spirit through his song. Ten days later a strong whirlwind came and Coyote rushed to close the door to the house just as the whirlwind was about to enter. The whirlwind, unable to enter the house, swept by the dead person and eternal life ended and death began. (14)

All of the above myths could be brought to life with mime and oral storytelling as in "Four Worlds- The Dine Story of Creation" as previously explained.

## CONCLUSION

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Myths come from the soul of people. Whether these people are Native Americans, Greek, Egyptian or of any other culture they have in common their soul stories. The feeling is so strong that the myths are passed down from generation to generation until they become an oral tradition and serious literature.

These stories deal with life, death, the animate and inanimate. They have given mankind an explanation. They are a solution to curiosity and give a sense of hope.

The Native Americans are a reality to our children. They learn about them from preschool through high school. They are a culture that to some extent they can identify with. They are part of our soil. Our younger generation has a positive keen interest in them. Hollywoodization of the Native American being bloodthirsty has been taken over and minimized by academia.



Hopefully a unit of this type will inspire our youth to continue reading the literature of nations lost. If they remember Chief Seattle's response to the Great Chief in Washington they will often reflect upon it. And someday they will truly feel and understand how they are a very important strand in this so very large web of life.

## Notes

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1. Jane Yolen, *Sky Dogs*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, CA 92101, 1990.
2. Translation from the University of Washington.
3. *World Book Encyclopedia*, Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, Chicago, IL, 1973 pp 122-123
4. *Children's Britannica*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, IL, 1988, vol. 12, pg. 16.
5. Joseph Bruchac, *Native American Stories*, Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado, 1991, pp 5-9.
6. *Ibid.* pg 11-18.
7. *Ibid.* pg 33.
8. *Ibid.* pg 77-78.
9. *Ibid.* pg 95-98.
10. Bertha Dutton, and Caroline Olin, *Myths and Legends of the Indians of the Southwest.*, Bellerophon Books, Santa Barbara, CA, 1996.
11. Hohn Manchip White, *Everyday Life of the North American Indian*, Indian Head Books, New York, 1993. pg. 15.
12. Jane Yolen, *Sky Dogs*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, San Diego, CA 92101, 1990.
13. Dr. Robert Paulker, *Expository Writing*, Dr. Robert Paulker, 1993.
14. Joseph Bruchac, *Native American Stories*, Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado, 1991, pg. 121-23.

## STUDENT RESOURCES

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Baylor, Byrd, *Hawk-I'm Your Brother*, Aladdin Books, 1986.

A young boy develops a relationship with a young hawk that he steals from his nest.

Bruchac, Joseph, *Native American Stories*, Fulcrum Publ., Golden, Co., 1991.

A series of myths from the North American Indians that center around the relationship between man and nature.

Dutton, Bertha, and Olin, Caroline, *Myths and Legends of the Indians of the Southwest*, Bellerophon Books, Santa Barbara, CA, 93101, 1996.

Describes the habits and beliefs of the mythmakers in the Four Corner region of the Southwest. Hopi, Acoma, Tewa and Zuni Indians.

Dutton, Bertha, and Olin, Caroline, *Myths and Legends of the Indians of the Southwest*, Bellerophon Books, Santa Barbara, CA, 93101, 1996. Navajo, Pima, Apache Indians.

The myths of the people in the Southwest who were artisans, songmakers and storytellers.

Fox, Frank, *North American Indians*, Troubadour Press, New York, 1995.

Color and story album depicting the North American Indians.

Goble, Paul, Her Seven Brothers, Bradbury Press, Boston, Mass., 1988.

This is a Cheyenne legend of how the Big Dipper was created.

Hahn, Elizabeth, The Blackfoot, Rourke Publ., Inc., Vero Beach, Fla., 32964.

The history of the Blackfoot, the myths, daily life, wars and victories.

Hoyt-Goldsniith, Diane, Cherokee Summer, Holiday House, 1993.

The story of a young Cherokee girl who lives in Oklahoma. It recounts the traditions that give her traditions.

Jeffers, Susan,, Sister Eagle, Brother Eagle, Dial Books, New York, New York, 10014, 1991.

A prophetic speech by Chief Seattle that captures the central belief of the Native Americans; that the earth and every creature on it is sacred.

Molencraft, Lisa Miller, Native Americans, Grand Rapids, MI., 1993.

A representative study of four groups of Native Americans. It is a compilation of oral and written language, reading, poetry, vocabulary development, spelling, critical thinking, math, social studies, art and music activities.

Smith, Kathie, Sitting Bull, Simon and Schuster Inc. New York, 1987.

The story of Sitting Bull, the Sioux Indian who came to represent the Native Americans.

Steadman, Scott, How Would You Survive as an American Indian, Franklin Watts, New York,

A detailed account of how the Indian survived at home, at war, in religion and in war.

Yolen, Jane, Sky Dogs, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, CA. 1990.

A myth explaining the appearance of the first horses to the Blackfoot Indians.

## **TEACHER RESOURCES**

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Burland, C.A. and M. Wood, North American Indian Mythology, Newnes, London, 1985.

An in-depth study of the mythologies of the Naive American.

Clark, Ella, Indian Legends from the Northern Rockies, University of Oklahoma Press, Oklahoma, n1966.

A compilation of stories told by the Native Americans in the Northwest Rockies region of the United States.

Erdoes, Richard and Ortiz, Alfonso, American Indian Myths and Legends, Pantheon Books, New York, 1984.

A compilation of 160 myths that illustrate the mythic heritage of 80 different tribal groups.

Haviland, Virginia, North American Legends, Collins, New York, 1979.

Tall tales particular to American, European and African immigrants and folklore of American Indians. Excellent teacher resource.

White, Jon Manchip, Everyday Life of the North American Indian, Indian Head Books, New York, 1979.

The story of the American Indian from his beginning and his development through the ages.

Spence, Lewis, Myths of the North America Indian, Dover Publications, Inc. New York, 1989.

A variety of myths that are told by the different tribes of the Indian nation.

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