

Grade 5 Language

Reading

Aboriginal Teaching Strategy

Creation Stories – Where We All Come From

Students read and compare creation stories from various cultures. In groups, they prepare a story for a reader's theatre presentation.

Related Curriculum Policy

- *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 2006*

Specific Expectations

Reading for Meaning

- 1.1 read a variety of texts from diverse cultures, including literary texts (e.g., short stories, poetry, myths, culturally focused legends, plays, biographies, novels), graphic texts (e.g., graphic novels, hobby or sports magazines, advertisements, logos, atlases, graphic organizers, charts and tables), and informational texts (e.g., editorials, reports, biographies, textbooks and other non-fiction materials, print and online articles, personal electronic and online texts such as e-mails)
- 1.4 demonstrate understanding of a variety of texts by summarizing important ideas and citing supporting details (e.g., topic sentence and supporting points in paragraphs, reports, online and print newspaper articles, restaurant or cafeteria menus; theme and supporting plot details in short stories, myths, and fairy tales)
- 1.6 extend understanding of texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience and insights, to other familiar texts, and to the world around them

Aboriginal Context

Throughout history, each civilization has conceived theories that explain the origin of life and the world. Aboriginal people are no different. In addition to their belief in the Creator having initiated life after creating the earth, they devised elaborate tales to explain how people should interact with each other and the Creator. These legends, myths, and teachings were not formally recorded, but were committed to memory by selected members of the community. These honoured storytellers used sand paintings and pictures drawn on birch bark scrolls, animal hides, and stones to illustrate the stories as they retold them.

Teaching Strategies

- Ask students about the beliefs they have about where people originally came from. Elicit a number of stories and theories, such as the biblical creation story, Darwin's theory of evolution, and other stories or theories they know about from their cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Explain that different cultures have different stories, theories, and beliefs about how their people came to be. Read aloud an example of such a story.
- Model how to create a Venn diagram to compare the biblical creation story and the story you read. Have students summarize the similarities and differences between the stories, and ask for examples from the stories that support their thinking. Fill in the diagram with their responses.

- Make available a collection of creation stories from various cultures, including those of Aboriginal peoples. Explain that Aboriginal Elders say that Aboriginal people have been here since the beginning of time and that the Aboriginal peoples of Ontario each have their own distinct creation story.
- Have each student choose and read one story.
- Have students discuss the story they read with a partner who has read a different story.
- Have the pairs of students create a Venn diagram comparing the two stories they have read. Have them cite examples from the texts to support the comparisons.
- Have the pairs of students form a group with one or more other pairs to share their Venn diagrams.

- Have each group select an Aboriginal creation story to develop as reader's theatre.
- Have the groups rehearse and present the story to the class.

- Have students make a journal entry about how the beliefs in the stories they read compare with their own beliefs.

Resources

The following recommended resources and web links were accurate at the time of publication. Teachers are encouraged to check that these reference listings remain current.

Bruchac, Joseph, and Caduto, Michael J. "The Earth on Turtle's Back." In *Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children*. Keepers of the Earth series. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997, p. 25.

This resource provides hands-on activities that inspire children to understand and appreciate Native American cultures and the earth.

Goodminds.com. <http://goodminds.com/homepage.htm>.

A catalogue of indigenous North American educational resources for students in Kindergarten to postsecondary grades.

Native Creation Myths. http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/firstnations/myths.html. Aboriginal stories reflecting the eight themes of genesis that exist among First Nations in Canada.

Making Community Connections

- Borrow books containing creation stories of various Aboriginal peoples from your local library and/or central board library. You may wish to focus on the creation stories of the Aboriginal groups in your local area.
- Contact a local First Nation group, Friendship Centre, or Métis organization to invite someone to lead a storytelling session with the class.

ABOUT THE TEACHER'S TOOLKIT

This teaching strategy is one component of *Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher's Toolkit*, a collection of resources designed to help Ontario educators bring Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom. Based on the revised Ontario curriculum, the collection includes resources for educators at both the elementary and secondary levels. Other resources in this series can be found on the ministry website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

