Comparing Tribal Origin Stories
Published on Lessons of Our Land (http://www.lessonsofourland.org)

Grades: 3rd - 5th Grade
Lesson: 1
Unit: 1: American Indian traditional land values
Subject: History/Social Studies
Additional Subject(s): English Language Arts; Science
Achievement Goal: Retell a North Fork Mono origin story and several other tribal origin stories and then respectfully discuss similarities and differences.
Time: Two class periods

Lesson Description:
In this lesson students will learn about origin stories of tribes and how to demonstrate respect for others’ beliefs.

Teacher Background:
There are as many different origin stories as there are different cultures and peoples. Each group of people has their own beliefs about how the world and universe came to be. The origin stories relate how the universe and the earth were created and how time and space were established. In this lesson the students will learn about origin stories of tribes and how to demonstrate respect for others’ beliefs.

American Indian tribes, like many other peoples, have explanations for how they originated as a distinct, unique people. Many stories tell of powerful beings that created peoples’ place in the world. From these stories, tribes derived laws, values, traditions and ceremonies. Many origin stories stressed kindness, generosity, cooperation and respect for the earth. In these stories, the universe could not be created without these teachings.

Some of the American Indian creation stories tell of beings that may at first seem bad or mean. The presence and actions of these beings serve a useful purpose by teaching valuable lessons about the potential for harm in bad decisions.

Many tribal individuals consider their beliefs as important everyday elements that contribute to rich tradition and cultural heritage. These beliefs are represented in ceremonies and teachings. They are passed on to each new generation through stories. The beliefs and traditions connect people to the land, plant life, all living creatures, and to the mysteries of birth, life, death and the spirit world. Some Native people compare these connections to those they have with family and relatives.

American Indian origin stories are not to be treated or told as simple “fairy tales.” Respect for others’ beliefs will make this lesson an experience that teaches appreciation of diverse communities. For more information on teaching origin stories, see “Suggestions for Effective, Respectful Teaching of American Indian Origin Stories in Diverse Classrooms” listed in the Lesson Resources section.

Standards:
This lesson aligns with Common Core standards SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4.

3rd Grade

SL1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
A. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
B. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
C. Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.
D. Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

**SL2** Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**SL3** Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

**SL4** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

### 4th Grade

**SL1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
A. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
B. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
C. Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.
D. Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

**SL2** Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**SL3** Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.

**SL4** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

### 5th Grade

**SL1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
A. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
B. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
C. Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.
D. Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

**SL2** Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**SL3** Summarize the points a speaker makes and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

**SL4** Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
Teacher Preparation Resources:

Student Activity:

1. Drawing on the background information above, explain what an American Indian origin/creation story is to the class.

2. Read the North Fork Mono Creation Story, “The Making of the World” in the Lesson Resources section to the class. Develop questions from one of the selected stories to discuss with students. Use who, what, where, when, why, and how questions, see Questions about Origin Stories in the Lesson Resources section. Read the story numerous times, explaining that this is how the North Fork Mono people have learned for centuries. We remember when we hear lessons many times so that we learn them deeply. Remembered and even partially understood, the story becomes knowledge belonging to the student. For elaborations of these ideas see the “Iroquois Creation Story Lesson Plan” listed in the Lesson Resources section. Have students read or tell the stories to each other (or to another, younger class) in small groups of three or four.

3. For stories to compare to the Mono story, consider the options below:
   - Read the Miwuk and Yokuts stories listed in the Lesson Resources section.
   - Acquire a video from the Native American Culture site and show selected creation stories to the class.
   - Have the students study the websites and read selected origin stories. If internet connections are not available for students, print and distribute copies of selected origin stories for them to read.

4. Compare in class the Mono origin story to another culture’s origin story. Remind the students that American Indian stories are just as valid as other cultures’ stories and these beliefs must be presented with respect.

5. Facilitate a discussion, asking questions such as:
   - What is similar about the various creation stories?
   - What is similar about all human cultures—why do all people have a need for stories like these?
   - On the other hand, what are the differences in creation stories?
   - What can we tell about the variety of different groups by hearing their creation stories?
   - After hearing the Mono story and comparing it to other creation stories, what things in the world would you say are important for the Mono people?
   - How do people use creation stories in their everyday life?
   - How do creation stories affect people’s behavior?
   - What sorts of laws might be based on origin stories?

6. As another way of learning from story, ask students to create a series of drawings or to contribute to a classroom mural that depicts an American Indian creation story, and share the mural with the school by placing it in a hallway or gymnasium. Emphasize that during this activity students should show respect for the story at all times.

7. After completing the drawings or mural have the students respond to their own artwork and the artwork of other students in a journal or in an oral discussion. Ask them to record or discuss what they see in the drawings, what shapes or colors stand out, and how the land and its various geographic features are depicted in the images.

8. Ask students to write about or discuss any new insights they have into the story after completing and viewing the artwork.

Evaluation:

Associated California State Academic Content Standards:
For general guidelines for aligning discussions with English-Language Arts Standards, see Using Lessons of Our California Land to Help Students Meet California State Content Standards.

Visual and Performing Arts Standards: Note that the Aesthetic Valuing standards in grades 3-5
Comparing Tribal Origin Stories
Published on Lessons of Our Land (http://www.lessonsofourland.org)

emphasize discussions in which students analyze, assess, and derive meaning from works of art, including their own. Such discussions will also help students meet many of the Listening and Speaking components of the English-Language Arts Standards.

History-Social Science: This lesson will help students identify the human and physical characteristics of the places they are studying and explain how those features form the unique character of those places.

In Grade Three, place names in the stories considered here can help students identify geographical features in their local region (Standard 3.1) and will provide a foundation for student descriptions of the American Indian nations in their region (Standard 3.2).

The stories in this lesson will help Grade Four students contribute to discussions of the culture, legends, and religious beliefs of the major nations of California Indians (Standard 4.2). The lesson can also help Grade Five students to meet Standard 5.1, which calls for students to describe the major pre-Columbian settlements of North America and their varied customs and folklore traditions.

Lesson Resources:

- Tales of Wonder II, Traditional Native American Children's Stories, 1998. Rich-Heape Films, Inc. (60 min)
- Native American Culture Site listing several traditional stories from a variety of tribes.
- Native American Lore Index Page
- Indian Legends, several origin stories and traditional tales from more than a dozen tribes.
- Miwuk Story
- Mono Story
- Yokuts Story
- Questions about Origin Stories
- “Suggestions for Effective, of American Indian Origin Stories in Diverse Classrooms”.
- Iroquois Creation Story Lesson Plan
- The Making of the World

Source URL: http://www.lessonsofourland.org/lessons/comparing-tribal-origin-stories

Links: