

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Native American Literature

The Sky Tree

In the beginning, Earth was covered with water. In Sky Land, there were people living as they do now on Earth. In the middle of that land was the great Sky Tree. All of the food which the people in that Sky Land ate came from the great tree. *Tree of Life*

The old chief of that land lived with his wife, whose name was Aataentsic¹, meaning "Ancient Woman," in their long house near the great tree. It came to be that the old man became sick, and nothing could cure him. He grew weaker and weaker until it seemed he would die. Then a dream came to him, and he called Aataentsic to him.

"I have dreamed," he said, "and in my dream I saw how I can be healed. I must be given the fruit which grows at the very top of Sky Tree. You must cut it down and bring that fruit to me."

Aataentsic took her husband's stone ax and went to the great tree. As soon as she struck it, it split in half and toppled over. As it fell, a hole opened in Sky Land, and the tree fell through the hole. Aataentsic returned to the place where the old chief waited.

"My husband," she said, "when I cut the tree, it split in half and then fell through a great hole. Without the tree there can be no life. I must follow it."

Then, leaving her husband, she went back to the hole in Sky Land and threw herself after the great tree.

After Aataentsic fell, Turtle looked up and saw her. Immediately Turtle called together all the water animals and told them what she had seen.

"What should be done?" Turtle said.

Beaver answered her. "You are the one who saw this happen. Tell us what to do."

"All of you must dive down," Turtle said. "Bring up soil from the bottom, and place it on my back."

Immediately all of the water animals began to dive down and bring up soil. Beaver, Mink, Muskrat, and Otter each brought up pawfuls of wet soil and placed the soil on Turtle's back until they had made an island of great size. When they were through, Aataentsic settled down gently on the new Earth, and the pieces of the great tree fell beside her and took root.

1. Aataentsic (ay-tay-ent-sik)

-from the Huron-Eastern
Woodland tradition

Ancient woman = wisdom?

Great fall - think fall of man, original sin, Eve, sacrifice

Fruit - think Adam + Eve, temptation, seeds = new life, new beginnings

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The Sky Tree- Study Questions

1. Why do you think the woman’s name is Ancient Woman?
2. In many creation stories there is a woman who takes a “great fall.” Recall other tales that include a woman “taking a fall” and explain why you believe woman always takes the tumble.
3. Eating from a tree of fruit is also an important story of creation. Why do you think the symbol of fruit is also an important factor to many tales?
4. Explain the woman’s sacrifice. Why do you think she chose to jump?
5. What does the rooting of the tree symbolize?

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The Sky Tree- Connecting to Creation Myths

Directions: After reading *The Sky Tree*, compare the happenings of what is going on in the story to other well-known creation stories (i.e. Christian, Islam, Muslim, etc.). Fill out the boxes after watching the videos on other creation stories and compare it to *The Sky Tree*.

	Christianity	The Sky Tree
1.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>

	Islam	The Sky Tree
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	Buddhism	The Sky Tree
3.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>

	Hindu	The Sky Tree
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Take notes here:

1. Diver Myths consisted of

2. An archetype is

3. Examples of archetypes in creation stories include

4. Native American Turtle Mythology. Summarize sentences 2 through 7 here:

5. Finally, read “The World on the Turtle’s Back”

Group 1: First, compare the Native American creation myth to Christianity & Islam, then discuss these 4 questions related to Sky Tree and The World on the Turtle's Back

1. Why do you think the old woman's name is Ancient Woman?
2. In many creation stories, there is a woman who takes a "great fall." Discuss other tales that include a woman "taking a fall" and explain why you believe WOMAN always takes the tumble.
3. Eating from a tree of fruit is also an important story of creation. Why do you think the symbol of fruit is also an important factor to many tales?
4. Why do you think the Iroquois honor both the left-handed twin and the right-handed twin?

Group 2: First, compare the Native American creation myth to Buddhism & Hindu, then discuss these 4 questions related to the Sky Tree and The World on the Turtle's Back.

1. Explain the woman's sacrifice. Why do you think she chose to jump?
2. What does the rooting of the tree symbolize?
3. Discuss the importance of the turtle in creation myths.
4. How would you relate the left-handed and right-handed twins to your own concept of good and evil?

**Observation Form
Inner-Outer Discussion Circle**

Your Name:	Partner:																			
DIRECTIONS: Each time your partner does one of the following, put a check in the box.																				
SPEAKS IN THE DISCUSSION:																				
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AFTER DISCUSSION: What is the most interesting thing your partner said?																				
AFTER DISCUSSION: What would you like to have said in the discussion?																				

