

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.

The old chief of that land lived with his wife, whose name was Aataentsic<sup>1</sup>, 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



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# Native American Literature

## **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?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

# Native American Literature

## 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.

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## Islam

2.

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## Buddhism

3.

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[illegible]

Hindu

4.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

# Native American Literature

## Trickster Tales

What is a trickster tale? Many Native Americans used stories to pass down through the generations to provide future members with information about **moral and ethical situations**- they were kind of a warning system to make future generations do the "right thing." As with most stories, trickster tales have a formula that one must follow:

**Step One:** Must have a natural setting and characters- Characters must be well-developed and must include animal characters with human qualities (i.e. A coyote that can speak, etc.)

**Step Two:** Must include a magical happening or magical transformation that refers to an explanation to something in the natural world. In most trickster tales, the magical happening is a creation of a characteristic of an animal (i.e. a buck's antlers, an elephant's tusks, etc) or a natural force in the natural world (i.e. tornados, hurricanes, etc.).

**Step Three:** Must include a trickster. Someone in the story that either tries to trick all other characters or tries to foil the plan for everyone involved.

**Step Four:** Include a moral in the story. The ending of the trickster-tale needs to serve as a moral compass for the reader- a cautionary tale that bad things will happen or things will not go your way if you do wrong.

### Example Trickster Tale: A Snail's Tale

There once was an old woman who traveled from town to town with a large bag she carried on her back. As she traveled from town to town, many villagers said, "Oh, what a nice woman, let's help her through her journey." They would let her stay in their homes and dine at their tables, all the while not knowing that she was stealing from them during her stay.

The Great Eagle saw her evil doings and told her, "Old Woman, if you do not stop your evil ways, a great burden will be placed upon you."

The Old Woman looked at the Great Eagle and said, "Oh Great Eagle, I have changed my ways. Thank you for believing in me!"

The next town held many villagers whose homes held many treasures. The Old Woman stayed with the most prosperous family in the village. She could not help herself in taking the family's most prized possession- a clay pot lined with a buffalo hide.

The Old Woman thought, "Surely one item won't hurt."

As the Old Woman left the village with the pot in her bag, the Great Eagle swooped down and told her, "Old Woman, you have been warned, and from now on you shall crawl to every destination you seek always carrying a heavy burden upon you back!"

The Old Woman started to shrink to the ground unable to move her arms and legs. She started slithering on her belly, noticing a heavy item upon her back. As she looked behind her, she noticed a great shell resting on her back.

Thus the arrival of the first snail.

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"



## Observation Form

### Inner-Outer Discussion Circle

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

