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ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide is intended to introduce elementary school students to African and American Indian myths. The twelve African myths included are selected from ten different tribes. These myths are organized into the following categories: (1) introduction to African myths, (2) tales of the Gods, (3) tales of man, and (4) animal tales. Seven American Indian myths are also presented. The guide includes teaching activities, questions for class discussion, and numerous illustrations. (See related documents, CS 200 500-502, CS 200 504-508.) (DI)

Literature Curriculum, Levels C - D

AFRICAN AND INDIAN MYTHS

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AFRICAN AND INDIAN MYTHS

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"Coyote and Eagle Try to Bring the Dead Back From Spirit Land"

"The Legend of the Bridge of the Gods"

"The Hiaqua Myth" (The Indian "Rip Van Winkle")

The African folk tales, in the volume entitled African and Indian Myths, consist of the following copyrighted selections, slightly adapted by permission of the copyright owners. The texts of the tales may not be issued in a version to be released to the public domain.

"How Spider Won the Sky-God's Stories," from Akan-Ashanti Folk Tales by R. S. Rattray. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930.

"The Separation of God from Man," from Tales Told in Togoland by A. W. Cardinall. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

"Mulungu and the Beasts," from How the People Sang the Mountain Up by Maria Leach. New York: The Viking Press, 1967.

"The Creator Nyame and His Four Wives," from Tales Told in Togoland by A. W. Cardinall. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

"How Kanu Made Man," from Limba Stories and Story-Telling by Ruth Finnegan. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967.

"How Man Got Fire," from African Myths & Tales, ed. Susan Feldmann. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963.

"The Black and the White Brothers," from Limba Stories and Story-Telling by Ruth Finnegan. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967.

"Why the Bush-Fowl Calls at Dawn and Why Flies Buzz," from African Myths and Legends by Kathleen Arnott. New York: Henry Z. Walck, Inc., 1962.

"The Dog and the Wheel," from Limba Stories and Story-Telling by Ruth Finnegan. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967.

"Why the Dog is the Friend of Man," from African Myths and Legends by Kathleen Arnott. New York: Henry Z. Walck, Inc., 1962.

"Why the Crab Has No Head, or How the First River Was Made," from African Myths and Legends by Kathleen Arnott. New York: Henry Z. Walck, Inc., 1962.

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"The Origin of the Indian Tribes," from Indian Myths of the Northwest by C. B. Bagley. Seattle: Lowman and Hanford Company, 1930.

"How the Seasons and the Birds Came," from The Earth Speaks by Princess Atalie. Old Tappan, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940.

"The Legend of the First Frog," from Indian Myths of the Northwest by C. B. Bagley. Seattle: Lowman and Hanford Company, 1930.

"How the Flowers Came to Be," from The Earth Speaks by Princess Atalie. Old Tappan, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940.

"Coyote and Eagle Try to Bring the Dead Back From Spirit Land," from Indian Myths of the Northwest by C. B. Bagley. Seattle: Lowman and Hanford Company, 1930.

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AFRICAN MYTHS

Two characteristics of African myths and tales make them particularly appropriate in an elementary literature curriculum. In the first place, the tales are part of a still-living oral tradition. Today, as two hundred years ago, students of African culture often must listen and record. Their translations show that the oral tradition is still strong. Stories of the beginning of time such as "The White and Black Brother" and "The Dog and the Wheel" include details of modern times. Because of books and the influence of white western culture, story-telling as an art is dying out in some tribes, but in many it is still considered a great honor to be one of the chosen tellers of tales. In some tribes, the tales are told as entertainment; in others they are held as sacred. In either case they are presented as a ritual. The tribe may gather after the day's work is done, and seated around a fire listen to and participate in the telling of tales.

A second feature of these tales is that many of them involve animals. These animals are similar to those found in Aesop's fables and in Indian legends. They "people" the earth, talking and thinking like humans. At times the animals are superior to humans; they may even be superior to the high god himself! The animal as "trickster" is a common figure. In "How Spider Won the Sky-God's Stories," the trickster outsmarts the god. In "The Magic Drum" the tortoise is defeated, and the king proves more cunning. Throughout the tales more emphasis is put on cunning than on the achievements of physical strength.

This is a different world than the world presented by Greek and Norse myths. The majority of the tales that have been anthologized deal with a world that is man-oriented. There is still the wish to explain, to answer the plaguing "whys" of existing, but the why's that are asked are "after the fact" questions. For example, the question, "But where did God come from" is not dealt with here. The stories of "The Separation of God from Man" and "Mulungu and the Beasts" deal with gods who are already present. The stories say, "God is here; man is here; the animals are here--now why are things the way they are?"

It would be simplistic to assume that there are no African myths of universe origin or of the origin of the gods. Susan Feldman suggests that the reason more of them don't appear in collections is that "sacred stories, like sacred objects and persons, are highly potent, dangerous, and therefore must be guarded with secrecy."[1] A study of the way stories are told and the role the animal characters play in these stories is then only part of the African world, but it is the part of the world to which your students will probably be most responsive.

A last general point is that the tales collected here are only a very small sampling of African stories. Unlike Greek and Norse mythologies,

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[1] African Myths and Tales, ed. Susan Feldman, (New York: Dell, 1963), p. 21.

we are not dealing with a small area with a relatively homogeneous literature. There are many tribes in Africa, many different dialects. The stories used here come from ten of these tribes. Each tribe has its own names for the god or gods it envisions.

Lesson One

INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN MYTHS

Ask the class what they know about Africa. Point out to them that there are many, many tribes in Africa. As they read Greek, Roman, and Norse myths, so they will also be reading stories about some African tribes.

Ask the class to think back to the other myths they have read this year. What were some of these stories about? Make a list on the board of their answers. They will probably include such things as who the gods were, what kind of adventures they had, why things are the way they are, and so on. Pick out the answers that are relevant to a study of African mythology. Explain to the class that many of the stories they will read from Africa will also be about the adventures of gods and men and most importantly about how things came to be.

Like Indian myths and the fables, the stories from Africa will have animals as main characters in the stories. Ask the class to describe what the animals in the Indian myths were like. Again show that the animals in African myths will be similar. They will think and talk like human beings.

Explain that in one tribe in Africa, the Ashanti tribe, the people believed that the reason there are any stories on earth is because an animal won thme in a contest with the sky-god himself. Before you explain who the animal was, see if the class can guess what animal would be so intelligent that he could outwit a god. Be sure to have them explain why they chose the animal they did. Then tell them that the animal is a spider and his name was Kwaku Ananse. How might a spider win stories? Do they have any ideas before they read the story?

Read this story with the class. It is a more difficult version than some of the other tales included but it also retains more of the original flavor of the story. It is a story that should be listened to, as you will notice when you pronounce the many onomatopoeic words.

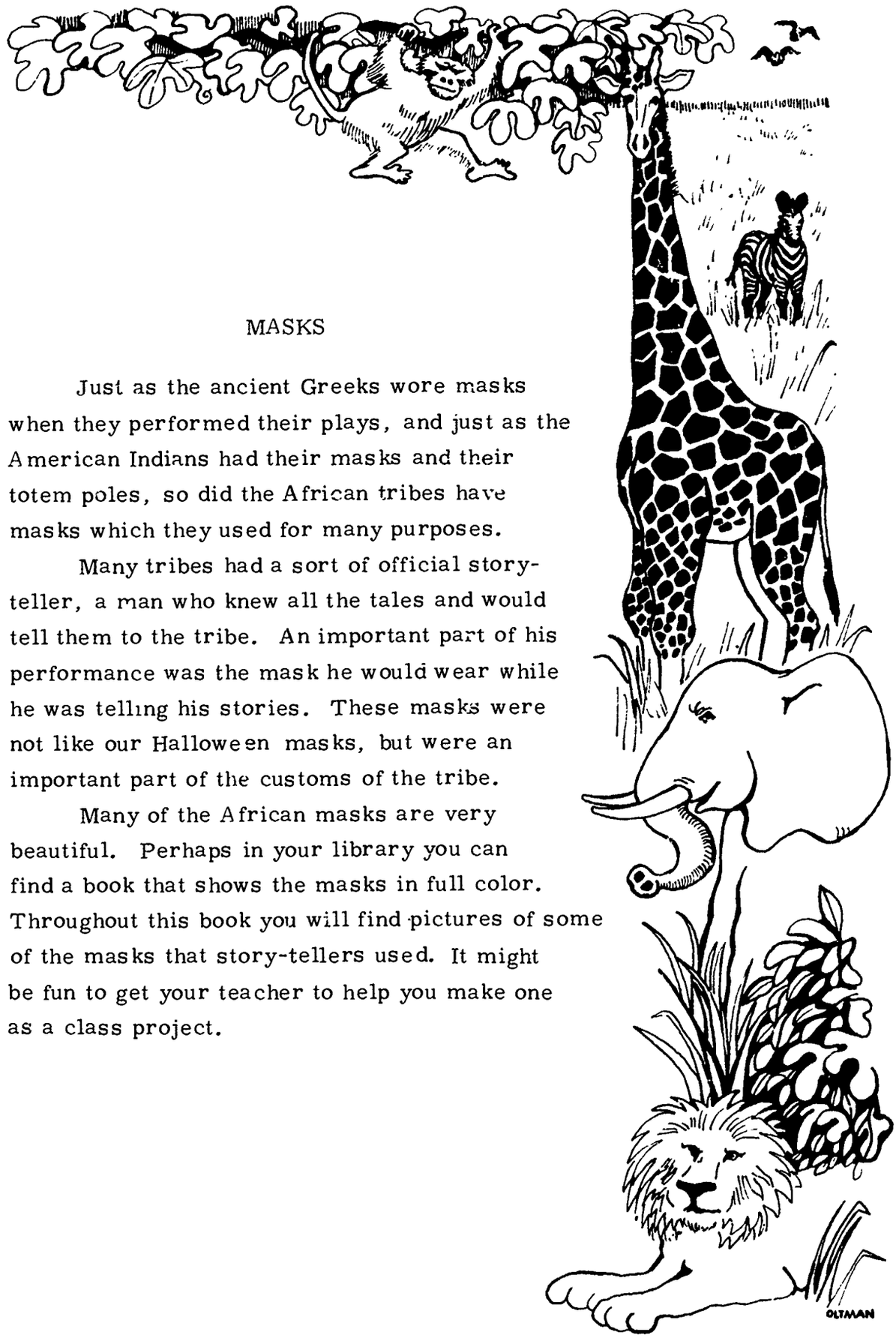
Comprehension Questions:

1. Why did the sky-god think the spider would not be able to win the stories?

2. Spider and his wife think of many clever tricks to bring back the things the sky-god wants in exchange for the stories. Which tricks do you remember--the python, the hornet, the leopard, the fairies? Can you think of other tricks Spider might have used?

3. What gift did Spider bring that the sky-god had not asked for?

At the end of the story the sky-god says that the stories will from now on be called "spider-stories." Tell the class that they will be listening to and reading many more stories that Spider caught in his web of tricks.



MASKS

Just as the ancient Greeks wore masks when they performed their plays, and just as the American Indians had their masks and their totem poles, so did the African tribes have masks which they used for many purposes.

Many tribes had a sort of official story-teller, a man who knew all the tales and would tell them to the tribe. An important part of his performance was the mask he would wear while he was telling his stories. These masks were not like our Halloween masks, but were an important part of the customs of the tribe.

Many of the African masks are very beautiful. Perhaps in your library you can find a book that shows the masks in full color. Throughout this book you will find pictures of some of the masks that story-tellers used. It might be fun to get your teacher to help you make one as a class project.

Lesson Two

TALES OF THE GODS

Part A

Before the class arrives make a "web" as large as you wish on the bulletin board or on the wall of the classroom. Use colored twine or heavy package cording. Make the web so that it has many "compartments" in it. The idea will be that as the class reads the African tales they can do illustrations of them, and these illustrations can be inserted in the web. Explain this to the class. This will be a good way to review the first lesson. Also ask for one or two students who would like to make a spider to put on the web. Talk about spiders. How many legs do they have? What do their bodies look like? What color or colors might they be? Perhaps the students would like to suspend the spider above the web, hanging by a string from the ceiling. This way he will really look as if he is waiting to snare another story.

Tell the class that when Spider won the stories he won stories not only about men and animals on earth but also about the world of the gods. The first stories they will read will have gods as the main characters. Pull down a map of Greece and then pull down a map of Africa. Ask the class if they could guess how many times Greece would fit into Africa? Africa is much bigger, and because it is much bigger the people were spread farther apart. When we read these stories of gods we will notice that each tribe has its own name for its main god.

Today have the class read, aloud or to themselves, two short stories that tell why the gods don't live on earth with man. Before you read the stories have the class see if they can think of any reasons why the gods don't live on earth. Tell them to read carefully so that they can discuss why the Africans believed the gods left earth.

Comprehension Questions:

"The Separation of the Gods from Man" (Krachi)

1. Can you help me list on the board the reasons Wulbari (write his name on the blackboard) left earth?

2. When Wulbari left where did he go to live?

3. Who did Wulbari choose for his helpers in the sky? Can you think of a reason why he would choose animals to be his court?

"Mulungu and the Beasts" (Yao)

The story of Mulungu and his people, the beasts, answers the same question that the first story did. It tells us how the gods left earth.

Write Mulungu on the board, then ask the class if they listened well enough to answer these questions:

1. Where is man discovered?

2. Why did Chameleon hate m.

3. How does Mulungu leave earth?

This story can be used as more than just an explanatory tale of why the gods left earth. Ask the students if they have seen the Smokey Bear advertisement (or bring one in). How is Smokey like the chameleon in this African tale?

Activities:

As suggested at the beginning ask one or two students to make a spider for the web.

Ask the class if they can think of some ways either of these two stories might be illustrated. Have them draw the pictures for the web.

Tell the class to pretend that they are Chameleon or one of the other beasts. Since Mulungu left them on earth, what kind of posters might they make to warn the other animals what man is like or to warn man what might happen to him if he isn't more careful? Spider would probably be glad to have some of these posters in his web because he must live on earth with man too.

Part B

Review with the class the kind of lives the Greek gods lived. Ask them if they can remember a story that showed that the gods loved, hated, were jealous, and so on? Tell them that the African gods also are capable of displaying these very "human" feelings. The Greek gods were often married, but usually they had only one wife. The African god may be married too but they often had many wives. This custom presented problems in earthly as well as heavenly marriages. The story of "The Creator Nyame and His Four Wives" shows some of the problems that occur when a man or god has more than one wife.

This story is again harder than some of the other tales presented. We suggest reading it with your class. The following questions are offered for use throughout the story.

End of paragraph 2: Which gift do you think Nyame would choose?

Middle of paragraph 5: What reason could Akoko have for putting the babies in the pot?

End of paragraph 8: What was the gold the hunter saw?

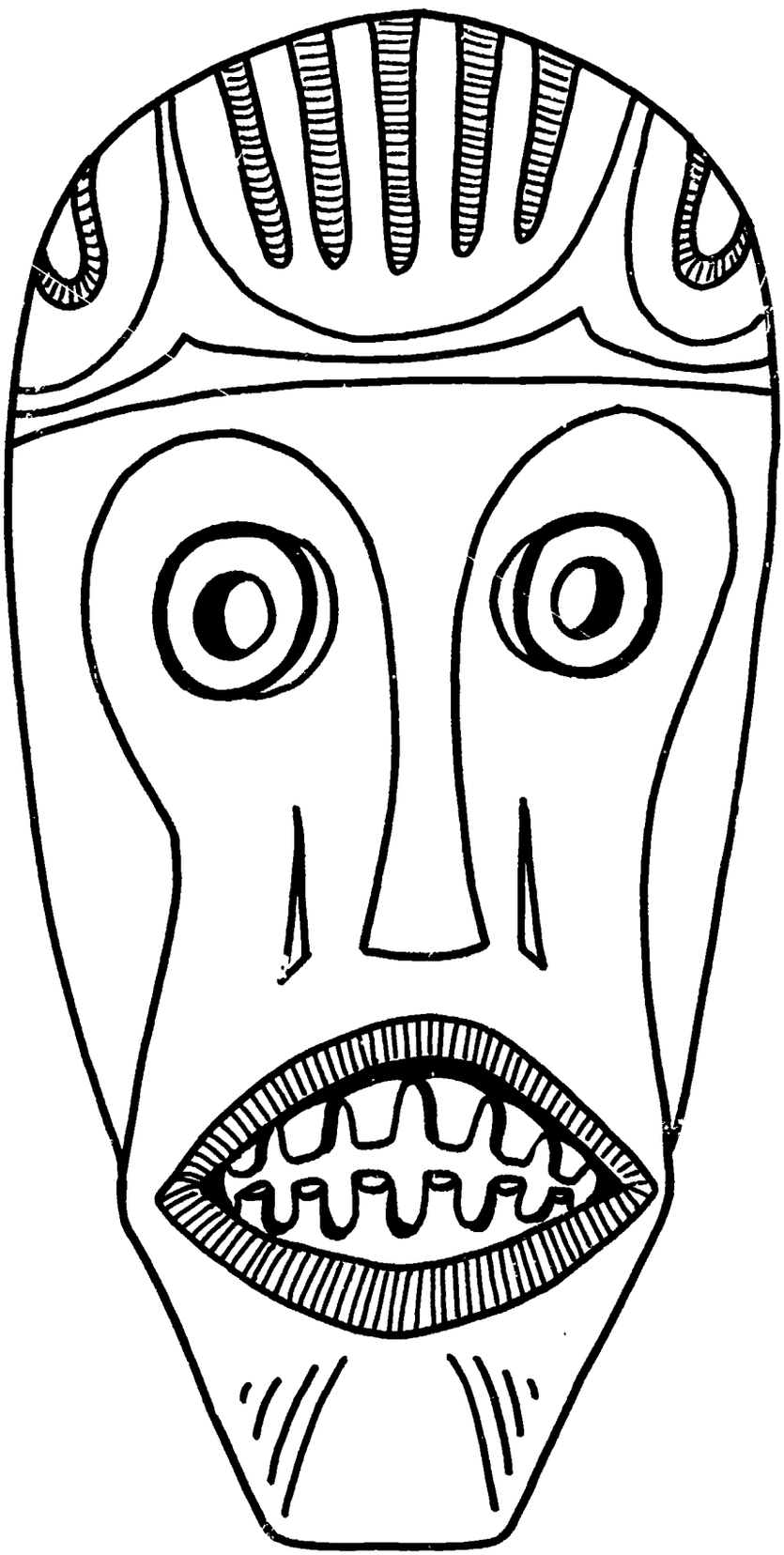
End of paragraph 14: Who could tell the story that the stones would tell?

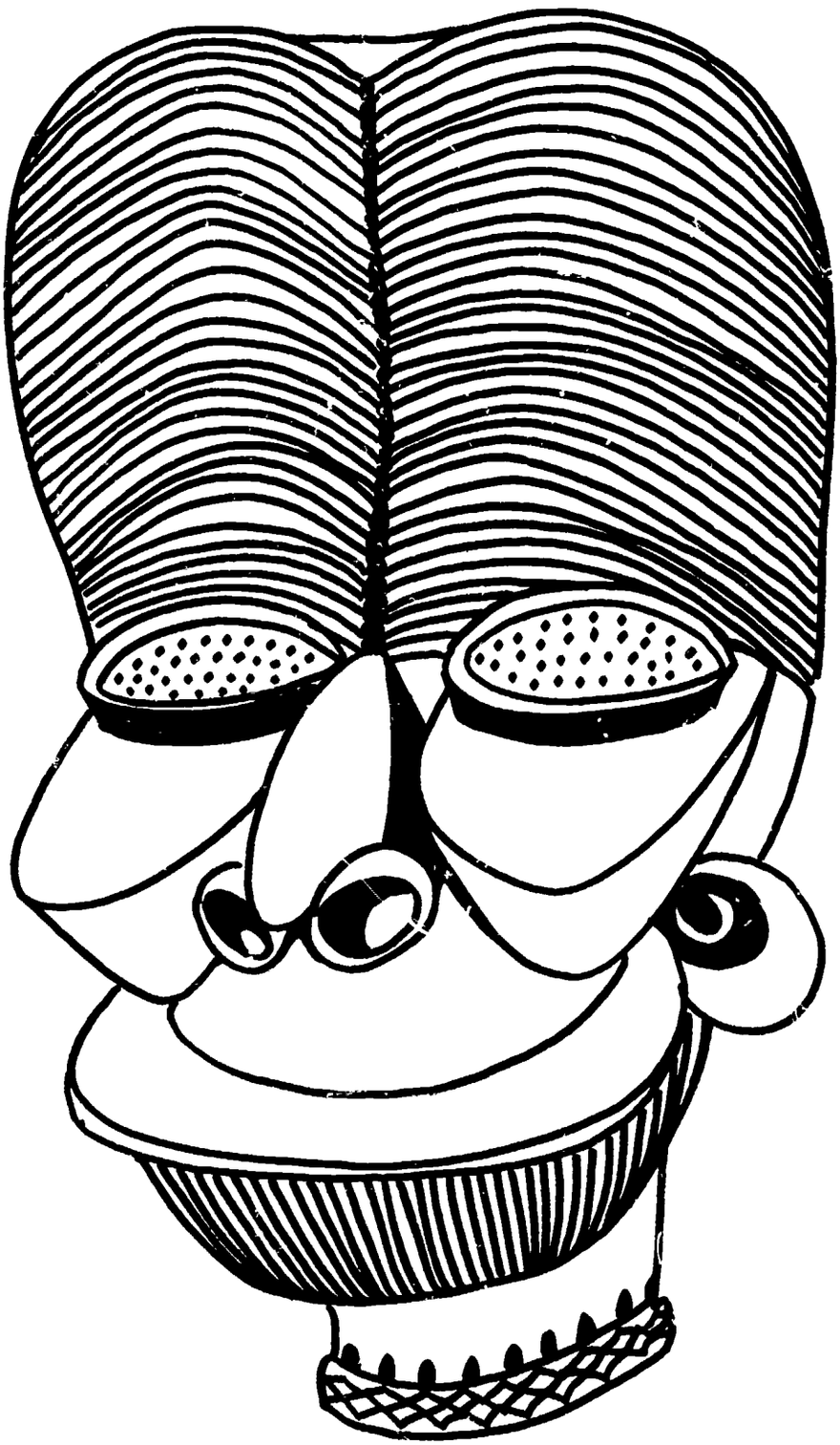
End of paragraph 16: What might Nyame do to punish Akoko?

End of story: Are you happy with the way the story ended? Would you change the ending?

Activities:

Tell the students to remember how imaginative Spider was in snaring the sky-god's stories. Can they be imaginative too? Give each student several pieces of construction paper, some scissors, and glue. Have them make an illustration for the story from the paper.





Lesson Three

TALES OF MAN

In this lesson we see man in relation to his gods as well as to his fellow men. The first story gives the Limba tribe's explanation for how man was created.

A. "How Kanu Made Man" (Limba)

(1) Ask the students if they can remember any stories they've read that explained how men came to be. (They may mention Prometheus' creation of man, or the story of Deucalion and the flood. The most recent instance is that of Chameleon finding man in his fish trap.)

(2) Tell them that in this first story they will meet another god. His name is Kanu. Kanu becomes very thirsty one hot day and goes into the forest where workers are tapping the trees and drawing out the palm wine. These workers are very special, for they are the parts of the body! This tribe believed that long ago the foot, hand, head, stomach, and all the other parts of the body lived separately. They could each move, think, and talk.

(3) The students can read this story on their own. Before they begin, make sure they understand what resin is.

Activities:

Instead of asking comprehension questions, see if the class can recreate the story. Tell them that just as Kanu put the body together part by part, so they will put the story together. Have one student begin the story as he remembers it, then go around to each student until the entire tale is completed.

Ask the class if they think stomach was a good choice for "Chief" of the body? What would have happened if head had been chosen? Have a game of follow the leader. Have each student become a part of his body. How would the rest of his body act if this part were the leader? Have the students act it out and talk about it. Remind them of the fable of "The Belly and the Members," and have them compare the two versions.

B. "How Man Got Fire" (Hausa)

(1) Again ask the class if they can remember another story that explains how man got fire. (Prometheus.) Ask them what happened to Prometheus for giving this possession of the gods to man.

(2) Tell them that this story, like the story where Spider outwitted the sky-god, is about a trickster. This trickster, however, is a young boy no older than the members of the class. Unfortunately, this young boy is severely punished by the god Obassi Osaw.

Comprehension Questions:

1. Why does man want fire?

2. How do the chief and his son first try to get the fire?

3. How does the boy steal the fire?

4. What is his punishment?

5. Do you think the world is better because man has fire? What story we've read tells about a bad use of fire? Can you think of others?

C. "The Black and the White Brothers" (Limba)

This third story is also about a theft. The white man steals a gift intended for his black brother. Some discussion of the historical background of this story may be necessary. See headnote.

Comprehension Questions:

The question may arise, "How can white and black children be full brothers?" Refer the question to the class. See if they can think of a reason. A general answer is that the African tribe telling this story notes that this happened long, long ago. That is the way they believed it to be then.

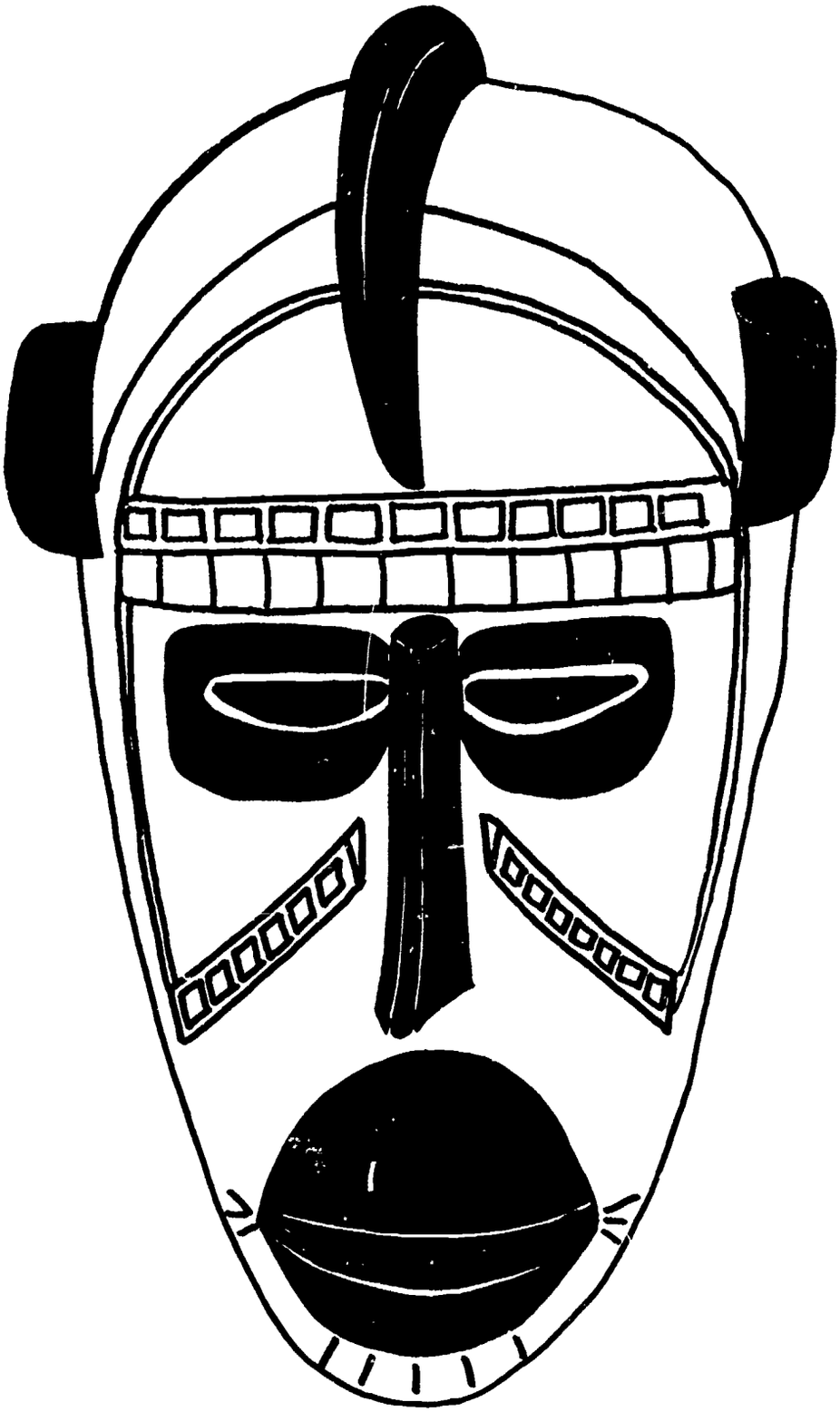
1. Which son does the mother like best?

2. Which son is the father's favorite?

3. What does the father make for his children?

4. How does the mother trick the father? Because of the trick what gift does the white son receive? The black son?

5. What "moral" or lesson does the father give at the end of the story? Has this moral been kept by white and black men?



Lesson Four

ANIMAL TALES

Start this lesson by having a general discussion of books, comics, or TV programs the students have read or watched that have had animals as characters. Refer back to some of the animals seen so far in African tales and see if they have anything in common with the animals in Charlotte's Web, to take one example. Some points they may mention:

Animals talk, think, and generally act like humans.

Sometimes the animals are smarter than the humans; many times they are kinder.

Often the humans are seen as mean and out to get the animals. The reader or viewer often cares more about the animals than about the human figures.

Ask the students to bring in pictures, posters, book covers, etc., that represent some of their favorite animals. Make a display of these.

To start this unit out have the class join with you in reading aloud "Why the Bush-Fowl Calls at Dawn and Why Flies Buzz." It lends itself well to choral reading.

A. "The Dog and the Wheel (Limba)

Remind the class of the story of the white and black brother. There the white brother steals the gift intended for the black. In this story the white man is again the villain. Here he steals from the animals. This is the Limba tribe's explanation for why dogs chase cars. Before the class reads the story, see if they can think of any reasons why dogs chase cars.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What did the animals want from Kanu? (Explain that Kanu is the high god of this tribe in the same way that Malungu and Wulbari were high gods of their tribes.)

2. What did Kanu give the animals?

3. What did Kanu give the Europeans? Which was the better gift?

4. What did the European do while the animals were in swimming?

5. What did the European do with the wheel he had stolen from the dog?

6. According to this tale, then, why does a dog jump and bite at a car wheel?

Activities:

Give the class five minutes and see how many things each student can write down that man has made from his theft of the wheel. Call on the students for their answers and write a list on the board.

Give this story back to Spider by drawing a picture that illustrates a scene in the story.

B. "Why the Dog Is the Friend of Man" (Bushong)

Ask the class if anyone knows where dogs came from originally. What family of animals are they descended from? (Most authorities cite the wolf family.) The important point is that at one time dogs were wild. The dog in this Bushong tale lives with jackal who is his good friend. This tale shows why dog betrays the animals' world and goes to live with man.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What are the two things man has that dog wants?

2. Why does man let dog stay that night?

3. What does dog promise man if he will let him stay forever? Has dog kept his promise?

4. Do you think man's world is a good world for dog to live in? Do you think he made the right choice in leaving the animal world?

Activities:

Ask three students to prepare a skit in which they act out the main events of this story. One will play jackal, one man, and one dog. They should tell the story as they remember it, adding or leaving out points as they wish.

Ask the students to draw a comic strip in which dog tells jackal what it is really like to live in man's world.

C. "Why the Crab Has No Head, or How the First River Was Made" (Ikom)

This is another story where a trickster appears. Will he be successful, and gain what he desires without punishment?

Comprehension Questions:

1. How does Crab hunt?

2. The elephant is supposed to be Crab's friend but when he sees Crab's pile of game he orders him out of his sight. What does Crab do for revenge?

3. What does the elephant do to punish Crab? Do you think this is fair?

4. What does Crab do after he's lost his head?

Activities:

Tell the class to choose an animal they like or dislike and make him the hero or villain of their own story.

Write the story in a booklet and illustrate it, using cutouts, paint, crayons, or whatever is wanted. (Have some end project in mind--for example, the books could go to a children's ward in a hospital or be sent to a friend or relative.)

Put the story, scene by scene, on a long roll that can then be put through an opaque projector. Perhaps several students would like to work together on this project.

Lesson 5

THE HOW OF AFRICAN TALES

1) Explain to the class that African myths and tales, just like Greek and Norse myths and tales, tell of the adventures of men, gods, or animals. Like the Greek and Norse myths, the African myths explain why or how things came to be. Thousands of years ago in Greece and in the Scandinavian countries men told their myths and tales to one another. In Africa today tribesmen are still telling tales rather than writing them down in books. We are able to read their stories in our books because men and women have gone into the African villages and taperecorded the stories. Then they have written them down for us and others to read.

2) Remind the class of the day each of them added one part of the story of how Kanu made man to another part, continuing until the tale had been completed. In a way this is like an African storyteller, for he must recall from memory a story he has heard and then retell it.

   Explain that each student is going to become a storyteller. He may choose a story he has read before and retell it. He may make up a new story and tell that. Probably a dramatization of one of the earlier stories in this section would be best. A good one for whole-class participation would be "Why the Bush-Fowl Calls." When he tells the story he will, like the African storyteller, use a mask that he will make in class. Discuss with the class when and where they've seen or used masks. Halloween is the most obvious example. Why do children wear masks then?

   The mask each student will make can be of anything he wishes--a god, a person, an animal, a natural object such as the sun, the moon, or a star. The only requirement is that the mask should have some relationship to the story the student will tell.

   (Using the short myth of "Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky," make a mask and tell the story to your class. This will provide them with a model. You might invite a guest storyteller if you prefer.)

3) Have the students plan their stories. It will be more meaningful if the telling is directed toward a special event.

   a) Tell the stories in class for practice.
   b) Tell the stories in the lower grades.
   c) Tell the stories on a local TV program if possible.
   d) Have an African night for parents. Display the various examples of art work, including the web, and tell the stories.

4) Give the class some background information on masks before they begin the second step of the project.

   a) Invite your librarian to talk to your class, bringing books and magazines for your class to see, or have a display in the library which includes information on masks.

   b) Have the art teacher come in and talk about masks. Perhaps he will have some he's made to show the class.

   c) A film, The Loon's Necklace* from a Pacific Northwest Indian tribe, is told completely with masks.

5) Mask-Making Instructions:

Simple Design:

Use the front of an ordinary paper bag. Features may be cut out, with accents of crayon, paint, and construction paper cut-outs used. Anything goes here. Have the class bring interesting buttons, yarn, cotton, steel wool--whatever they or you can think of.

Complex Design:

There are three basic steps involved here--making the mold, applying papier maché, and painting the mask.

Step One: Ready-made objects may serve as a mold--a bowl, an inflated balloon, a large ball, an inverted pot, a mound of crumpled newspaper, tightly packed and tied with string. (Those items underlined are probably most accessible for the majority of students.)

Step Two: Wheat paste is used in applying the layers of papier maché. It is easily found in hardware stores and paint stores. The paste should be added slowly to a bucket of water and stirred thoroughly to avoid lumps. While you're doing this, have the class tear newspapers into narrow strips. (Paper toweling is even better but may be too expensive for your use; if not, use it!) Oil the mold with a thin coat of vaseline. Then dip the strips one by one into the paste and cover the mold.

Build up layer after layer of strips that have been dipped in the paste. Balls of the wet paper can be squeezed and molded into almost any shape--nose or snout, protruding cheeks, lips, ears, etc. Continue building up the mask over these features until

*Distributed by Encyclopedia Britannia Films, 1150 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, Illinois. (16 mm., 11 minutes, color, 1949)

you reach the desired thickness, then set the mask aside to dry. This will take several days. When the mask is dry, remove the base.

Step Three: The masks can be painted with poster paint or acrylics. The face and features can be painted any color. Anything goes here, as with the bag mask. Again, steel wool, yarn, buttons, curtain ring earrings, etc., can be used.

Note: The more complex mask designs are worth the extra effort; they turn out surprisingly well.

INTRODUCTION - AMERICAN INDIAN MYTHS

Because the nature of myths is discussed in the introduction to Greek mythology, it will not be discussed here. Instead, the nature of Indian societies in general will be discussed in hope that such material will be helpful in understanding the stories in this unit.

There are only a handful of generalizations about American Indians that can apply to all tribes. For the most part Indian tribes, even those in similar geographic settings or those living close to another tribe, differ too widely in their customs, religions, and general outlooks to allow for many meaningful generalizations to be made about Indians as a whole.

However, a few things can be said. The social organization of many American Indians was based on family or clan units. Clans were groups of people who could trace themselves back to a common ancestor. The family or clan was usually an important part of daily life, sharing in the raising and disciplining of children, in special rights and duties, conducting and attending ceremonies, even competing in games against other groups.

Almost all Indian societies believed that man was linked to all other living things by supernatural forces. Most Indians believed that every tree and flower, every living part of nature possessed a spirit which man, through his spirit, could make contact with. While several tribes worshipped a creator force, the white man's teachings of "the Great Spirit" were dismissed by many Indians.

Almost all Indian societies had shamans, sometimes called medicine men, although they dealt with much more than medical problems. These shamans claimed to possess supernatural powers which they could draw upon in order to help individuals or the group. Shamans could also call for destruction of enemies.

The culture hero and the trickster are the two mythical beings common to many tribes. The culture hero, the Indian grandmothers told their young listeners, had taught the tribal members their way of life a long time ago. The trickster was partly sacred and partly humorous, often outsmarting himself right into a barrel of trouble. In some tribes both characters were often combined into one, who might be a person or an animal.

Indian rituals and celebrations were often accompanied by dancing, drumming, and singing. Some dances were sacred while others were done for pleasure. Songs, like dances, differed greatly from tribe to tribe. Some songs related people's experiences or extolled certain deeds. Others were sung to nonsense words or meaningless

sounds. Almost all tribes used some sort of drum (drums, which could be heard across long distances, were also used to transmit messages). Some used an eagle-bone whistle. Young men courting Indian maidens often used flutes blown at one end rather than at the side. Almost all tribes used rattles made of gourds or turtle shells. Also, notched sticks were rubbed across each other to make rasping sounds.

Some tribes considered the earth to be their mother. Therefore, they could not sell land, for that would be selling their mother. Furthermore, in the spring when Mother Earth is pregnant, even today some Indians at the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico walk about in soft-soled shoes and unshoe their horses, so as not to harm her body. Some tribes today resist the use of steel tools which would wound the breast of their earth-mother.

Most Indians had great respect, even reverence, for nature, and tried to exist in harmony with it. It was believed that disease, pain, death, and other misfortunes awaited those who disturbed such harmony.

THE ORIGIN OF THE INDIAN TRIBES

After a short discussion of Indians (what your students know about them and perhaps some ideas from the introduction), read the first paragraph of the story out loud.

Ask students what kinds of animals might have been "animal people." When you have a list of twelve or so on the board, ask whether your students think each animal-god was good or evil, and ask what powers each of the gods might have had. Write key words of student responses after the name of each animal on the board.

If possible, show pictures of a beaver and a coyote, asking students which they think would be evil and which good. Then ask students to listen to the story about Wishpoosh, the evil beaver-god, and the good god Coyote.

VOCABULARY

whittle - to cut bits of wood off a larger piece with a knife

devour - to eat up greedily

carcass - a dead body

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. What evil things did Wishpoosh do? (He liked to kill and eat everything that crossed his path. He wouldn't let anyone have the fish that lived in his lake even though there were plenty.)

2. Why did the god Coyote feel sorry for the people who lived around Lake Cleellum? (The people were hungry for fish but the beaver god wouldn't let them have any.)

3. How does the author describe the size of Wishpoosh, the beaver-god? (Bigger than the biggest whale that ever lived in the sea.) Of the god Coyote? (As big as seven men.)

4. How does this story say the mountains and lakes of the Pacific Northwest were formed? (By Coyote and Wishpoosh fighting.)

5. What did Coyote do to the carcass of Wishpoosh? (Cut it into pieces and made various Indian tribes from the parts.)

6. Why did Coyote decide to go up in the sky to live? (Because the earth was full of people and there wasn't room for him.)

7. According to the story, what happens to Indians when they die? (They climb the sky to join Coyote, the god who made them.)

ACTIVITIES

1. On the board list the names of the tribes Coyote created and what part of Wishpoosh each tribe was made from. (Lower Columbia and Coast Indians--belly; Cayuse Indians--legs; Northern tribes--head; Yakima Indians--ribs.) List some of the other Pacific Northwest tribes. (Among them were the Bella Coola, Chimakuan, Chinook, Comos, Duwamish, Haida, Kusa, Kwakiutl, Nisqualli, Nootka, Payall Up, Salish, Shahaptian, Snohomish, Songish, Squamish, Tillamook, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Twana, Yonkalla.) Ask what parts of Wishpoosh's carcass might have been used for each one.

After you have a list, ask for volunteers to cut out from construction paper, a shape to represent the part of the body on the list. Ask the student to write on the shape the name of the appropriate tribe. Then pin up the parts on a bulletin board so that some semblance of a creature is formed. Label the bulletin board "Coyote Creates the Tribes."

HOW THE SEASONS AND THE BIRDS CAME

Before reading the story, write the questions on the board (or have them dittoed). Assign each student a particular question to answer.

VOCABULARY

strutted - walked slowly and proudly

nourishing - full of food value

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why were the animals angry with the red men? (Red men were killing them for food.)

2. Who created rabbit lettuce? (The Thunder Spirit.) Why was rabbit lettuce created? (To give the red men food, so they wouldn't kill animals.) Why was it called rabbit lettuce? (Because wherever Rabbit hopped, little green shoots of the plant sprang up.)

3. Why was Bear angry? (Because the animals created six months of warm weather and Bear only liked cold weather.)

4. How did Chipmunk get his stripes? (Bear scratched him when Chipmunk advocated warm weather.)

5. According to the story, why do we have twelve months or moons in a year? (The Council agreed to let there be as many months as there were stripes on a chipmunk's back, which is twelve.)

6. What animal gave mushrooms to man? (Frog.)

7. Who was Okee? (The evil spirit.) Why didn't Okee want the red people to climb through the thick wall that covered the sky and blocked out the sunshine? (Okee liked the dark days of winter and knew the red people would love and want the sunshine if they saw it.)

8. According to this story, why are some people fat and others thin? (All the people jumped into a lake of fat. The fast swimmers stayed thin but the slow swimmers were covered with fat they accumulated along the way.)

9. Where did birds come from? (They flew out of open doors in the great wall in the sky.)

10. How did the sun come to be? (Okee caught the brave who had opened the door and let the birds out. Okee turned the brave into the sun.)

11. How did the seasons come to be? (The birds were let out and flew to earth in three groups--winter, spring, and autumn groups.)

ACTIVITIES

1. "The red people were closer to the animals in those early days--in fact, red men and animals both spoke the same language."

Imagine yourself as an Indian girl or boy. You are out in the woods picking berries when you spy a lost puppy. Write a story about what you and the puppy say to each other. How will your story end? Will you help the puppy find his lost master or mother, or will you and the puppy stick together?

2. Imagine you are an Indian brave out hunting for food. It is winter and your family is close to starvation. You come upon a young deer and decide you must kill it.

Write a prayer to the Great Spirit asking his pardon for killing one of his creatures. OR: Write the apology you would offer to the animal because you must take his life in order to save your family from starvation.

3. List the winter birds (cedar birds, chickadees, woodpeckers, snowbirds), the spring birds (song sparrows, meadow larks, blackbirds, robins), and the autumn birds (crows, wild geese, sparrows, blue jays) on the board. Let each student pick one bird to look up in a reference book, draw a picture of the bird and write a short report about it.

Make a book out of the pictures and reports.

THE LEGEND OF THE FIRST FROG

Ask your students to imagine themselves in this situation: they are teenagers and are very much in love with someone and sure they want to marry that person, but their parents say they must marry a certain other person. What would they do?

After a short discussion, ask them to listen to the story to find out what a young Indian brave named Wah-Wah-Hoo does.

VOCABULARY

treachery - an act of disloyalty

hover - to move to and fro near a place

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Wah-Wah-Hoo want to marry the beautiful Hah-Hah? (He was in love with her.)

2. How did Wah-Wah-Hoo disobey his father? (He ran away with Hah-Hah and didn't marry Kla-Ka-Hah.)

3. What does this sentence mean: "Finally the evil demon Hunger entered Wah-Wah-Hoo's wigwam and stole from him the thing he loved best of all, Hah-Hah"? (That Hah-Hah died of hunger.)

4. How did Tyee punish his son? (Changed him into a frog.)

5. What does the frog's croaking tell the sons of men to do? (To be obedient.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Suppose the frog could be changed back into a handsome brave if he were kissed by a beautiful maiden. Write a group story telling how this might come about.

2. Ask students to recall the kinds of animals that were sent to search for Wah-Wah-Hoo. (Snake, mosquitoes, squirrel, eagle, wolves) Re-read the section in the story that describes how animals searched. Ask volunteers to act out the ways the different animals searched (including animals not mentioned in the text) while the rest of the students guess which animal is being portrayed.

HOW THE FLOWERS CAME TO BE

Before reading the story, discuss with your class some earlier myths of how things came to be, from Greek or African or Norse mythology. Tell them that this story is about how flowers came to be. Ask them to guess what the story will be like.

VOCABULARY

shreds - torn pieces

trespassing - entering illegally onto property belonging to someone else

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why was Mother Earth weeping? (She had no pretty clothes.)

2. How did the seeds get planted evenly in the earth? (The birds dropped the seeds and Wind blew upon them softly.)

3. Why was the Wind filled with jealousy? (He hated to see the flowers trespassing on his playground.) What did he do? (He blew hard until the petals were torn from the flowers.)

4. Why did Wind suddenly stop blowing? (He fell in love with the sweet-smelling wild roses.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Have your class make cut-outs or colored pictures of the various persons in the story.

2. Divide students into small groups where they can use their cut-outs to act out the story.

3. Make a class mural depicting the different seasons of the earth.

COYOTE AND EAGLE TRY TO BRING THE DEAD BACK FROM SPIRIT LAND

Ask students to recall the part Coyote played in an earlier Indian tale. (He used the carcass of Wishpoosh to create the tribes of the Northwest.) Say that Coyote tries to help Eagle in the story. Ask students to listen in order to find out whether or not Coyote succeeds in helping Eagle.

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why was Eagle sad? (Because his dear wife had gone to the spirit country--that is, had died.)

2. Why did Coyote and Eagle go to the land of the dead? (To bring back Eagle's wife.)

3. According to this story, when do the dead sleep? (In the daytime.)

4. How did Coyote disguise himself? (Killed the frog, cut off his skin, and put it over himself.)

5. Why did Coyote swallow the moon? (To leave the spirit people in the dark.)

6. Why did the box full of spirit people get heavier and heavier? (The spirit people were changing from air and foam into flesh and blood.)

7. What mistake did Coyote make and what happened as a result of it? (He opened the box too soon. The people changed back into their spirit forms and went like the wind back to the land of the dead.)

8. What law did the tired Coyote make? (Once a man is dead, he can never come to life again.)

9. Did Coyote help Eagle or hurt him? How? (Hurt him by causing Eagle's wife to return to spirit land forever.)

10. Who is happier, the living or the dead, according to the story? (The dead.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Ask students to imagine themselves to be made of air and foam. How would their arms feel? Their heads? Feet? How would they walk? Dance? Run?

Ask them to pretend they are packed in a box. Then ask them to gradually change into flesh and blood.

2. Discuss what the Indian land of the dead might look and sound like. Let students paint pictures using their ideas.

THE LEGEND OF THE BRIDGE OF THE GODS

Ask students how many of them have seen Mt. Hood or Mt. Adams or Mt. St. Helens. Ask them to describe the mountains.

Tell students that today they will learn how these three lovely peaks came to be, according to Indian legend.

VOCABULARY

regarding - looking at

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Loowit feel sorry for the tribes? (They were miserable without fire--no heat to keep them warm in the winter; had to eat their meat raw.)

2. What was Loowit's job? (To tend the fire.) What reward did Loowit get for doing her job faithfully? (Turned into a beautiful maiden.)

3. Why did Chief Klickitat and Chief Wiyeast go to war? (To decide who would win the hand of Loowit.)

4. Why was Saghalie angry with the two chiefs? (Their war caused their people great trouble and hardship.)

5. How did Saghalie punish Klickitat and Wiyeast? (He put them and Loowit to death.)

6. How did Saghalie make the three lovers beautiful in death? (He turned them into three famous snow-covered mountain peaks.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Ask students to name natural geographic places (lakes, rivers, hills, mountains) they are familiar with. List the names on the board.

Ask each student to pick one and write an Indian legend about how it came to be.

After the legends have been shared, gather them into a book called The Indians Speak.

2. Ask students to divide a large sheet of drawing paper into two sections. On one section ask them to draw a picture of Loowit the witch-woman; on the other a picture of Loowit the beautiful maiden.

THE HIAQUA MYTH
(The Indian "Rip Van Winkle")

Ask students what it means to be greedy. Then ask what a greedy Indian might be greedy about.

Tell them the story is about a greedy Indian called Miser by the people of his tribe, and he was greedy for hiaqua (hĭ ä′kwə), or Indian shell money.

Ask students to listen to find out what trouble Miser brings upon himself because of his greed.

VOCABULARY

camas root - a plant of the lily family with an edible bulb

sinews - cords or threads

summit - top

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the people of Miser's tribe despise him? (He was greedy.)

2. How did Miser find out about the great store of shell money at the top of the mountain of Tacoma? (His totem or special god, the elk god Moosmoos, spoke to him in a dream.)

3. What did Miser forget to do after he had strung the hiaqua? (He forgot to make an offering of thanks to the gods.)

4. How did the gods (the ta-mah-na-was) punish Miser? (They caused an earthquake and created a volcano, and one god threw Miser down the mountain side where he fell into a deep sleep for 30 years.)

5. How did Miser know that many years had passed as soon as he woke up? (He had grown very old--white hair was falling to his shoulders, his skin was wrinkled.)

6. How had Miser changed? (He had lost his love for hiaqua; his heart had been softened; his mind had been made clean.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Bring to class pictures of young people and pictures of old people. Discuss how they differ in appearance.

Then supply students with clay. Ask them to model a young person. Give them time to share their work when they are finished.

The next day ask them to use the same piece of clay to model an old person. Again, let them share.

2. Write a class story about a greedy person whose greed causes his downfall.

UNIT REVIEW--Follow the method laid out after the Norse Mythology unit.