

Why the Sky is Far Away

*& other stories to
Celebrate the Earth*

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"The Storyteller LuAnn Adams is a bit of an alchemist herself, turning an ordinary room into a fantastical landscape as she relates her vivid tales."

- New York Times

“All things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the man. The air shares its spirit with all the life it supports.” - Chief Seattle

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Why the Sky is Far Away

Notes from the Storyteller

“Treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It was loaned to you by your children.” - Native American Proverb

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Why the Sky is Far Away & other Stories to Celebrate the Earth contains the wisdom that countless generations discovered by living close to the earth. They had to take care of the soil, the water, the plants and live in harmony with their animal neighbors. As the stories show, the people eventually learned that the harm they caused the environment would one day affect their own lives. One common theme that runs through the stories is the belief that we are part of nature and that the community of people and the natural world depends upon a mutual, respectful relationship. The wisdom that these tales share is both the lessons learned by generations long ago and a lifeline to the beautiful healthy Earth we want the children of our planet to enjoy for many generations to come. LuAnn

Why the Sky is Far Away

Vocabulary

The Storyteller – In the early days, the keeper of history, culture & tradition. Storytellers were bearers of news, the keepers of culture, the historians & the entertainers. Traveling storytellers went from village to village with tales, songs anecdotes fables & news. They often created stories to teach important lessons.

Stories – Stories are the way that indigenous information, traditions & cultural values are passed on from generation to generation. Long ago, stories were often used to teach specific customs or ways of behavior that need to be reinforced or taught. Stories were also created & told as a way of explaining natural phenomena.

Folktale – A story, often with a known cultural origin, but whose authorship is not known. Folktales are stories that have traditionally been told, not written down, but passed from generation to generation, orally.

Porquoi tale – The How & Why Tales – Stories with a clear explanation of how some phenomena of nature was created or came to be. The stories often have a distinct Beginning, Middle & End & have a lesson or moral reason to be learned from the telling. Often, the Middle of the tale involves a ‘magical’ cause & effect that transforms/create the result that is stated in the title of the story.

Why the Sky is Far Away

Before/After the Performance

Read & Discuss: The Old Ladies Who Liked Cats by Carol Greene

Old ladies aren't the only people who like cats! I bet every child in your classroom has begged for a kitten at one time. Cats are carnivores which were domesticated by the Egyptians to keep rodents at bay. The rats ate the grain that the Egyptians harvested. Cats were so respected that when they died, they were often mummified.

Since the studies of Charles Darwin, scientists have had a greater understanding of food chains.

In the story there are actually 2 possible food chains:

#1: ----clover ---cows(milk)---sailors

#2: -----clover --bees---mice---cats---old ladies

Materials: Pictures and/or costumes for each food chain group

Activity: Have students draw a picture or get a costume for the role they will play in the food chain.

Divide your class into groups to represent all links of the food chains. Have each group 'remove its link' and then explain (or act out) what happens!

The Stories

Why the Sky is Far Away

How the Children Got the Sun Up in the Sky

The Big Carrot

How the Parrot Got Beautiful Colors on Her Wings

My Twelve Days of Diving

Nigerian Folktale

Bushman/Kohsian Folktale

Adapted from Russian Folktale

Indian Folktale

by LuAnn Adams

About the Stories

Why the Sky is Far Away A long time ago people could eat the sky, it was close and delicious. However, wastefulness and greed made the sky God reconsider his gift.

How the Children Got the Sun Up in the Sky Long ago there was no light and the people lived in darkness. When the boy with light under his arms was born, the people rejoiced!

The Big Carrot Based on the Russian folktale The Turnip, I adapted this story to make it about my family to celebrate farming, a giant vegetable, and teamwork.

How the Parrot Got Beautiful Colors on Her Wings A little bird's compassion and courage inspire a god to save a burning forest and the desperate animals trapped in it.

My Twelve Days of Diving A little girl and her Dad take a special trip exploring and diving in the ocean!

Some things to Try in Your Classroom!

Why the Sky is Far Away

Discuss with your students the meaning of this statement: "The lives of future generations depend on people's use of natural resources today."

Activity: Have your students write a letter from the point of view of someone living in the future, thanking this generation for conserving natural resources.

In the letter students should describe:

1. The types of things that the persons in the future get to do, because all natural resources are available.
2. Describe specifically on what actions their generation took to make sure that the people in the future have plenty of natural resources for their lives.

Discussion questions from the story: What is the chronological order of events in the story? What was the cause and effect in this story? What is the meaning of this story?

How the Children Got the Sun up in the Sky

How did the world change when the Sunman was born? Draw a picture and describe the world before and after the Sunman was born. Create a another story about how children helped the Stars and the Moon Got to be in the sky.

The Big Carrot Read the Russian Folktale "The Turnip". How is alike and different from the Russian Folktale? Write a story about a big vegetable that all your family members try to pull out. Add a body gesture that each person does and draw pictures of how all the people in your family are working together.

How the Parrot Got Beautiful Colors on Her Wings Why do you think the Parrot had so many friends in the forest? What did she do when the fire started? Why do you think the Great God who turned himself into an Eagle, started to cry? What does being brave, mean to you? Have you ever done something courageous that helped someone else? Has anyone down something courageous that helped you? Write and illustrate your experiences.

My Twelve Days of Diving Have you ever gone on an adventure where you learned about something new about the world, the environment or animals that you didn't know? Illustrate all the sea animals that the girl saw in her dream. Why is it important to protect the animals that live in the ocean?

Story Sources & Bibliography

- "Why the Sky is Far Away" Picture Book by Mary-Joan Gerson.
 "The Little Old Ladies Who Loved Cats" by Carol Greene
 "The Carrot" is adapted from the Russian Folktale "The Turnip". Many versions of this tale exist
 "The Sunman" "Joining In: An Anthology of Audience Participatory Stories " -by T. Miller.
 "The Secret Garden" "Barefoot Book of Earth Tales", pgs. 58-66. -by D. Casey & A. Wilson
 "Brer Tiger & the Big Wind" Picture Book by William J. Faulkner.
 "Why the Sky..." & "Brer Rabbit ..." are on L.Adams' "Tipingee, Brer Rabbit & the Mouse that Barked" CD
 "How the Parrot..." Is on L. Adams' "Jaws, Paws & Claws- Animal Wisdom Tales" CD
 "Wangari's Trees of Peace" Picture Book by Jeanette Winter
 "Earth Care: World Folktales To Talk About" Margaret Read MacDonald
 "Keepers of the Earth" by Michael J. Caduto & Joseph Bruchac
 "The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss
 "Kid Heroes of the Environment" by Catherine Dee
 "50 Simple Things That Kids Can Do To Save The Earth" The Earthworks Group

Helpful Websites

- "All About Earth Day" <http://earthday.wilderness.org/history>
 "All in this Together" Earth Day Activities by Nancy Schimmel: www.sisterschoice.com/activitylists.html

Closing Story: "Who Owns This Land?"

"Two neighbors feuded for a long time over a plot of land. They finally took their bitter disagreement to the rabbi, for arbitration. After their mutually contradictory claims were stated, restated, deflated and negated, the rabbi said, "I have heard your claims on the land. I have not yet heard the land speak. Please be quiet now, while I listen to testimony of this witness. " Bending low to the earth, the rabbi remained silent for awhile, then straightened his old back and said, "The land tells me it belongs to neither of you.. You she says, belong to her." - from "Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope" -edited by Ed Brody

Multicultural Storytelling Activities Across the Curriculum

In today's classrooms, multiculturalism is important. But how can teachers add this to their lessons and still have time for academic basics? One way is by integrating folk and fairy tales from around the world into your curriculum.

How to start:

Choose your folktale. (Find one that gives you goosebumps when you read it!)

After sharing your tale with your class apply the K-W-L method of investigation.

- What do they already KNOW about the folktale's country/culture?
- What do they WANT to know?
- What have we LEARNED about the country/culture through the tale & these questions?

Across the Curriculum Ideas:

Language Arts - Have the students rewrite the story's ending, act it out or write an original tale inspired by the story.

Social Studies - Find out how the Native people lived. Explore their civilizations, past and present. Discover, find current events happening in the country.

Geography - Locate your story's country on a map. Explore the terrain & climate.

Foreign Language - Explore the language. Ask a native speaker to visit.

Science - Examine the country's native wildlife.

Art - Examine the country's native arts & crafts. Create art similar or inspired by it!

Physical Ed - Learn a dance from the country.

Folktale with Teaching Activities:

"Who is in Rabbit's House" by Verna Aardema and/or *"The Tricky Caterpillar"* from "The Tricky Caterpillar & other Tales" audio CD by LuAnn Adams

Language Arts: Learn about African onomatopoeias: act out the story.

Social Studies: Make a model of a typical house of the Masai tribe.

Geography: Locate Africa & Kenya on a globe. Discuss climate & terrain.

Foreign Language (& Math): Invite a Swahili speaker to your class. Learn 1-10!

Science: Research the animals that are native to Kenya.

Art: Make African animal masks.

Music: Find traditional instruments. Play a CD of African or Kenyan music.

Culture & Cuisine: Explore traditions & customs. Make an African stew!

How to Tell a Story

I think one of the most important tenets of storytelling is to really love the story that you are sharing. If the story comes from your heart, then it tells itself through you, in a natural expression of sharing. It is very important to practice in order to understand the characters, the plot of your story, and 'the flow' of the piece. Then, carefully choose your audience. Storytelling is a joyous art, and if you enjoy yourself, your audience will, too! Each time you tell a story, you have the opportunity to better understand how you can respond to your listeners and shape your story. You can work on your timing by cutting or lengthening specific moments, holding for laughs, and more! If your material is from a written text, don't be afraid to have the text handy when you are practicing or even when you are performing. Storytellers find their own version of the text that they are telling. It is the 'voice' inside that shapes the tale into a unique expression of the teller. As you practice and become more comfortable with your stories, they will tell themselves, through you! -L. Adams

Helpful Books for Learning & Honing Storytelling Skills for Students & Teachers

Barton, Bob & David Booth. "Stories in the Classroom". Hinemann Educational Books, 1990.
 Gillard, Marni. "Storyteacher: Discovering the Power of Storytelling for Teaching and Living". Stenhouse Publishers, 1996.
 Hamilton, Martha & Mitch Weiss. "Children Tell Stories. A Teaching Guide". Owen Pub., 1990.
 Hamilton, Martha & Mitch Weiss. "Stories in My Pocket. Tales Kid Can Tell". Fulcrum Pub., 1996.
 MacDonald, Margaret Read. "The Storyteller's Start-Up Book". August House Pub., 1993.
 Mooney, Bill & David Holt. "The Storyteller's Guide".
 (Storytellers share advice for the Classroom, Boardroom, Pulpit & Stage.) August House Pub., 1996.

"Tell me a fact and I learn. Tell me a truth and I'll believe. But, tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever." - Native American Proverb

LuAnn Adams

is an awarding-winning storyteller, recording artist, actor & author. She tells stories for children & adults at schools, theaters, libraries, museums, zoos, aquariums, wildlife centers, festivals, hospitals & special-needs learning centers across the United States—as well as in Vietnam, Cambodia & Egypt. Each storytelling performance inspires young people to discover their courage, explore the healing power of dialogue for creating choices & embrace their hope-filled dreams for a peaceful world.

LuAnn has received 23 touring grants from the **Cincinnati Playhouse** to create & perform in both the Marks & Shelterhouse Theaters, multicultural storytelling programs for children & families that she has also toured in schools, libraries & community centers in the Ohio & Kentucky. Her animal storytelling programs have delighted visitors at national wildlife centers, zoos & aquariums New York & New Jersey for more than 15 years. LuAnn conducted storytelling master classes at **Northwestern University** in Chicago for five years. She has performed in Elementary & Middle Schools & for the **Clark County School Librarians Association** (CCSLA) annual meetings twice, in Las Vegas. LuAnn has created, performed & conducted storytelling residencies extensively in NYC & East Coast schools for more than 25 years. For the past 5 years she has performed Civil War stories for History Re-Enactment Festivals in Minnesota, sharing stories with more than 20,000 Middle & High School students.

LuAnn created & performed ***"The Rabbit in the Moon & other Marvelous Tales of the Night Sky"*** at the Abrams Planetarium in East Lansing Michigan in March 2020. This is her 2nd performance series for the Wharton Center, she performed ***"Jaws, Paws & Claws – Animal Wisdom Tales"*** at the **Pasant Theater** in January 2017.

LuAnn is a member of the National Storytelling Network, New York Storytelling Center, Actor's Equity Association & SAG-AFTRA. She has a BA in Theater Arts & Child Psychology from Macalester College & an MFA in Acting from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. Her award-winning storytelling CDs may be found in schools, libraries & homes all over the world. LuAnn recently added 9 Pre-recorded Performances that are now available for booking on her website.

"The storyteller LuAnn Adams is a bit of an alchemist herself, turning an ordinary room into a fantastical landscape as she relates her vivid tales."
- New York Times

Watch LuAnn's Storytelling:
www.luannadamsstoryteller.com
Tales21st@aol.com

LuAnn's CDs & individual tales are available for download & purchase on Amazon.com:

"Jaws, Paws & Claws - Animal Wisdom Tales"

Won: The National Parenting Publications (NAPPA) Gold Award

"Tipingee, Brer Rabbit & The Mouse That Barked"

Won: The National Parenting Publications (NAPPA) Gold Award

"The Tricky Caterpillar & other Tales"

Won: The Parents' Choice Silver Honors Award & The National Parenting Publications (NAPPA) Honors Award

"Brave Little Red & other Tales"

Won: The Parents' Choice Recommended Seal & The National Parenting Publications (NAPPA) Gold Award

"These excellent collections of well-told tales deserve a place in every library with an audio storytelling collection." - School Library Journal

The Earth and the People ARE ONE

by Joseph Bruchac



The Great Spirit
is our Father, but the Earth is our Mother.
She nourishes us; that which we put into the
ground she returns to us, and healing plants
she gives us likewise. If we are wounded, we go
to our mother and seek to lay the wounded
part against her to be healed.

Begadi (Big Thunder), a Wabanaki man (Curtis, 1923)

ONE OF THE OLDEST CONCEPTS IN Native American traditions is the recognition of Earth as the source of human life. Literally and figuratively, the Earth is our mother. It is a concept so old that it is firmly embedded in the languages, ceremonial practices, and traditional stories of indigenous cultures throughout the western hemisphere. Rather than being a romantic vision, it is a logical view of reality, rooted in the Native practice of closely observing the physical world. It is reflected in patterns of language and story which make extensive use of metaphor, natural imagery, extended similes, and what the western world calls "personification," describing non-human beings and things as if they were people.

However, it is important to recognize that such western literary conceits as "personification" lose their meaning when applied to cultures where the European tradition of viewing the world with nature on one side and human beings on the other just doesn't work. People are not apart from nature, they are within it, one point on a great circle of being. The animals are not just animals, they are "animal people." People and animals are not separate, but connected to each other in many ways. In the indigenous stories of the Americas, animals can take on the appearance of human beings, even marry humans and have children. Human beings may also take on animal form or desert their human ways and live out their lives as a bear, a seal, or some other non-human person. (Of course, this is also found in European traditions. But in the modern world, such stories are viewed by most Europeans as nothing

more than story, with no literal truth.)

Animals are also seen not as dumb beasts, with no ability to communicate or think as do humans, but as equals, teachers, and even elders. The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) of the northeastern woodlands offer a clear example of this. In one of my favorite stories, a boy is adopted by the bears when his callous uncle abandons him in a cave. The nurturing behavior of the mother bear in that story is an example for human parents to follow. Being directly identified with an animal is far from an insult. Not only do all traditional Haudenosaunee belong to clans—which bear the names of such non-human beings as Bear, Turtle, and Wolf—they are often proud to describe themselves as bearing certain characteristics of those clans. For example, members of the Turtle Clan are slower and more determined than Wolf Clan members, who tend to be fast-moving and more excitable.

According to another Haudenosaunee tradition, the clan system came about long ago when a young man who had been carefully observing nature for a long time said that the troubles his people were having were a result of their forgetting “to follow the example of nature which the Creator made.” The clan system was then devised as a means of linking the people more closely together as a community operating according to the principles to be seen in the natural world around them. Because of this man’s wisdom, he was given the name He Who Has Great Ideas (Porter, 1993).

Viewing the workings of the world around them led virtually all of the indigenous peoples of the Americas to envision concepts of duality and balance. “For every action there is an opposite and equal reaction” is both a law of physics and Native American common sense. Rain falls from the sky and the grass grows up from the earth. Together the sky father and the earth mother give birth to new life. All of us, human beings, animal beings, plant beings—even the stones, the water and the wind—come from the body of that same Mother Earth. It may simply be said that the Earth and the People are one, just as the mother and her biological child are one.

Thus, though we may differ, even as children who belong to the same family may differ in temperament and interests and appearance, we are all relatives. It is with that in mind that Lakota people of the Great Plains say the words *mitakuye oyasin*, which means “all my relations,” whenever they enter or leave the sweat lodge. The prayers said within the sweat lodge are ultimately meant for all our relations, human and other beings, for Earth and all of creation.

A view of creation and the earth around us not simply as

alive but as related to us as closely as we are related to our parents and siblings, is both an ancient view and a revolutionary one. The real conflict between the indigenous peoples of the American continents and the European invaders was not a result of primitive people being confronted by civilization. It was a direct consequence of clashing worldviews. Land speculation and the “development” of land, the use (even the “wise use”) of the earth as a means of making wealth for individuals has characterized the last five centuries of colonization. Yet how can anyone own their mother? How can anyone buy and sell their relatives? (Of course, they can. It is called slavery.)

Really seeing the earth as our mother overturns ideas of private property. Smohalla of the Nez Perce people—the same Nez Perce who were later forced off their lands in the Wallowa Valley and fought

under Chief Joseph—said these words around 1850:

You ask me to plow the ground. Shall I take a knife and tear my mother's breast? Then when I die she will not take me to her bosom to rest.

You ask me to dig for stone. Shall I dig under her skin for bones? Then when I die I cannot enter her body to be born again.

You ask me to cut grass and make hay and sell it, and be rich like white men. But how dare I cut off my mother's hair?

(Spinden, 1908)

When we turn to the traditional stories of human creation, a common theme predominates. The people were either created out of earth in one way or another or emerged from out of the Earth. In the Abenaki story of the creation of Gluskabe, whose name might be translated as “The Talker” (making him the first storyteller), some of the dust from creating the world remains on the hands of Kisi Nwaskw. Kisi Nwaskw brushes that dust off onto the Earth. Then that earth shapes itself into a person. In some cases, such as the Lenape creation story, human beings are not created directly from the Earth herself, but spring up as shoots from the roots of a great tree. Of course, as the offspring of trees, we may also see ourselves as rooted in the nourishing Earth.

Among the Pueblo and Dine (Navajo) peoples of the southwest, the Emergence story tells of worlds beneath this world which were destroyed as a result of wrongdoing. In each case, as that previous world was being destroyed by fire or flood, a few people (human people and animal people together) were able to escape by climbing up through a hollow reed to a new world above the old one. Our present world is either the Fourth World (according to certain Pueblo traditions) or the Fifth World

WE MAY ALSO SEE OURSELVES AS ROOTED IN THE NOURISHING EARTH.



(according to the Dine). Numerous prophecies, such as the well-publicized prophecies of the Hopi people, warn that this world, too, will be destroyed unless wrong-doing ceases. That wrong-doing, in the minds of many Native Americans, includes such insults to Mother Earth as deforestation, strip mining, and the widespread pollution of her water, soil, and air. Unless we recognize our errors and begin to make real changes in our relationship with Mother Earth, we will not survive. While some might see that prophecy as superstition and others as metaphor, it has become increasingly clear that it contains literal scientific truth.

Although I realize that this takes on the presently accepted theories taught in all of our schools, it is important to note that no Native American tradition makes any mention of migration across a land bridge from the north. The Bering Straits theory is seen by some Native Americans as a European way of turning truly indigenous people into just another, slightly earlier group of immigrants. I have spoken with traditional elders and storytellers all around the continent. None of them accept the theory of Asian migration. Our stories, they usually say, tell us that we originated here. We were made from this soil. There are numerous migration stories, but in many cases they are stories of travel from south to north, from west to east or even tales of long ocean voyages (Deloria, 1995).

Meanwhile, archaeology keeps pushing the "first" records of human habitation in the "New World" further back. Fifty years ago, it was said that the first men (sic) reached North America less than ten thousand years ago. Now it is generally accepted by the scientific community that people have been here for thirty thousand years. Meanwhile, Portuguese archaeologists have found clay pottery in the Amazon which they have dated as one hundred thousand years old (Muller, 1989). This argument for an original or at least a much more ancient presence of the indigenous people in the Americas is not one that I expect to win. But it is worth thinking about.

A decade ago an Arishinabe friend of mine in Michigan, Professor Joseph Rose, read me some of the "undecipherable" birch bark records which had been passed down in

his family. Those stories, recorded in pictographs, speak of a very ancient history, of such things as the migration of his ancestors to the northeast seacoast and then back again to the region of the Great Lakes. Then Joe smiled. "You know," he said, "no one knows where the Cro-Magnon people, who are about the same as modern human beings, came from. There are all these Neanderthal people in Europe and then, out of nowhere, in the upper Paleolithic, Cro-Magnon appears. I think they came from here. They were us."

It has been said that, as we stand on the dawn of a new millennium, human beings are in need of a new story. We need a new way to speak about the cosmos and the place of human beings in the age that is coming. I am not certain that is true. There will always be new stories as long as there are human beings, but the old stories can still serve us well if we listen to them and understand their deeper meanings. Listen to what the Native American stories of earth and creation have to say to us. They sing with a voice as strong as the first breath. We were born from this earth and are still of this earth. We are related to everything that is alive. We came from nowhere else—and if we wish to remain we must treat our Mother with respect. The Earth and the People are one. ♦

IF WE WISH TO REMAIN WE MUST TREAT OUR MOTHER WITH RESPECT.

Bibliography

- America: the New World or the Old?* by Werner Muller (Frankfurt am Main, Verlag Peter Lang, 1989)
Clanology: Clan System of the Iroquois by Tom Porter (North American Indian Traveling College, 1993)
The Indians' Book: Songs and Legends of the American Indian edited by Natalie Curtis (Second Edition, Harper and Brothers, 1923)
The Nez Perce Indians by Herbert Spinden (American Anthropological Association Memoirs, Vol 2, Part 3, 1908)
Red Earth, White Lies by Vine Deloria, Jr. (Scribner, 1995)
- Joseph Bruchac, who lives in the Adirondack region of upstate New York, is a poet, songwriter, and author of numerous books. Of Abenaki heritage, he has been a storyteller-in-residence for Native American schools and organizations across the country for the past two decades. He has been a featured performer at the National Storytelling Festival and has also been featured at international events. He is the owner/publisher of the Greenfield Review Press, in Greenfield Center, New York. His latest book, Tell Me a Tale, will be published by Harcourt Brace & Company in 1997.*



of World Tongues and Earth Tales

A storyteller-ecologist shares
insight into how various cultures
around the world share their
day-to-day narratives.

by Michael J. Caduto



Now this story, I didn't make it up!" begins a Sefwi storyteller from Ghana. "Who did then?" asks the audience.

"Once upon a time, in a certain town," says a storyteller from India.

The Mandingo storyteller, who lives in the Gambia River valley of northwestern Africa, begins by saying, "A really unique story has no end."

A popular Arab opening to a story is: *Kan ma kan. Bidaa nihki, willa innam*—which translates "There was, there was not. Shall we tell stories, or sleep on our cots?"

In France, a tale may begin with *Cric crac, socque, cuiller à pot; marche aujourd'hui, marche demain. A force de marcher, on fait beaucoup de chemin*, which means, "Cric Crac, clog, kitchen spoon; walk today, walk tomorrow. By walking and walking, we cover a lot of ground."

Storytellers may cover a lot of ground, but the stories themselves grow from the very Earth upon which they are first told. That is where they take root. Traditionally, the Wolof people of Gambia only tell their stories in the lands where the Baobab tree grows. From Siberia to the tip of South America and from Africa to Polynesia, these stories grew. Through these tales, the natural world speaks to the people who walk upon it and who use it to stay alive. But stories have wings, too, which carry them far and wide on the winds of our imaginations.

A Time and Place for Stories

In most traditional cultures, stories are told in special places and at certain times. In Ireland and many other lands, stories are shared as friends and family gather fireside during the

long, cold nights of winter. This is true in France, among the Gè and the Caduveo peoples of Brazil, among the Yamana of Tierra del Fuego, among the Yoruba of Nigeria, and among the Tlingit of northwestern North America, who gather in large, plank houses to hear the old tales. The tales of Greece are often told by lantern light. The Wolof people tell stories both day and night, at home, in the fields, by the wells and in the village. All it takes to bring a story to life, say the Wolof, is two people gathered together. The Maya of Guatemala and Mexico tell stories around the kitchen fire, during common times of work, and when attending marriages, baptisms and funerals. In India, stories are often told to make boring or tedious work more bearable. In some Arab cultures, stories are told in both summer and winter but only at night. Palestinian tales are not shared during the summer. They are often told to small gatherings of people related to the storyteller, once the day's work is done and everyone has had their evening meal.

Children are present at most storytellings, but there are certain times, such as after the children have gone to sleep, when adults gather to share stories meant for older ears. Sometimes, the tales go on into the early hours of the morning. While stories were once told to audiences made up of friends and relatives, listeners today may come from far and wide to hear the old tales.

Many cultures believe that telling stories in the wrong time or place will cause bad things to happen. In Iraq, it is said, if stories are told during the day, horns will sprout from your head and your gold will turn into iron. The Bantu of southern Africa say that someone once grew long, black horns after telling stories during the daytime. Some other African cultures believe that stories should only be told at night because if a child tells stories by daylight, his or her parents will die. A custom among many Native American cultures is that stories should only be told after the last autumn thunder and before the waters of spring flow free. If you tell stories at other times of the year, a snake will bite you or you may freeze to death.

Traditional Stories and Storytellers

Garingani, n'wana wa Garingani, "I am Narrator, daughter of Narrator." So begins a storyteller of the Shangaan people in southeastern Africa. The audience chants back, *Garingani, Garingani!* Traditionally, the *Garingani*, or "Narrator," is a family's grandmother or eldest woman. While telling her story, she may sing, clap, stomp her feet, drum or play a wind instrument. In Japan, India and Palestine, it is often the elder women who carry the old stories. Women are the traditional Arab storytellers.

As you sit around many traditional storytelling circles, however, the voice that carries the tale may be that of a man or a woman, old or young. Men and women share the storytelling in many cultures, including the Maya. In Ireland, women share stories about music and folk beliefs, as well as

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reprinted from *Storytelling in Mana*

stories that record family genealogies. Men tend to tell adventure tales. Men tell most of the stories among the Gè Indians, too. Among the Yamana, men tell stories for entertainment and women commonly share stories in smaller gatherings of family and friends.

A good story involves the audience. The Yoruba storyteller from Nigeria often begins with a riddle. During the story, the teller uses drama and song and often plays drums and other traditional instruments. Many African storytellers and the Kewa tellers of Papua, New Guinea, use songs in their stories, to which audiences respond. In Vanuatu, Melanesia, the Ngu-na constantly repeat phrases and the listeners join in. Many West African storytellers use elaborate makeup to look like animals or other story characters. While telling a tale, they often stop to comment or ask the audience questions.

Why Earth Stories?

Traditional tales contain the wisdom that countless generations have harvested by living close to the land, growing their own food, and making the things they needed with their own hands. In order to live, they had to take care of the soil, the water, the plants and the animals. As the stories show, people eventually learned that the harm they caused the world around them would one day come knocking on their own door. The care they showed would be returned in kind with food, clean air and water, and materials with which to fashion tools and other necessities. The tales also reveal that life was not all work—the traditional peoples of the world have always enjoyed a beautiful sunset, the sweet smell of a flower, and the joy of a newborn fawn.

In many stories, it is clear that traditional cultures often believe that all of nature is alive: those things that move and even those that do not. There is a breath of life in a tree, a hawk, and the long wind that blows across open places and gently bends blades of grass. A spirit lives in the shadow that grows between the hills as the sun sets, in the rocks of the hills themselves, and in the moon that rises into the starry sky. Over and over in the old tales, we read of the common faith in a benevolent, unseen Creator of the wonders that surround us. Like the natural world, stories are sacred and are treated with respect and reverence.

We All Have Native Roots

No matter what culture or cultures our ancestors come from, traditional stories can help us trace our roots back to their source. We all have ancestral ties to Native peoples who lived close to Earth. Their wisdom lies deep in our memories. One common thread that runs through the stories is the belief that we are a part of nature, and that the community of people and the natural world depends upon a mutual, respectful relationship. Although we cannot help but change our environment as we live in it and use its resources to keep us alive, we can do everything possible to have a positive impact and nurture the natural world.

Besides entertaining us and helping teach moral lessons to

both young and old, tales give us a sense of our own cultures and to whom we are related. Some groups of stories, such as those from Greece, Italy, Turkey and Israel, have a close kinship. Stories help to explain the natural world around us; they carry on our religious beliefs, our artistic traditions and the particular ways we use language. The jokes, humor and teasing found in many stories help to relieve the tensions that arise from living in close family and community. In this way, stories are a kind of medicine, a way of healing the wounds of life. The wisdom of Earth stories is both a link to our past, and a lifeline to the beautiful, healthy Earth we want to leave as a legacy for future generations.

The Tales' Tails

Tales do have tails. Traditional stories often close in a particular way. In Polynesia, the Kapingamarangi end their tales with *Waranga tangata hua*, which means, "Just a tale the people tell." The Marquesan people, of this same region, simply say, "It is concluded." The Shangaan Garingani spits on the ground at the end of her tale to ward off evil spirits. An Assamese storyteller in India finishes with, "We had to send out clothes to the washerman, so we came home." At the close of a traditional story in Corsica, one might hear, *Fola foletta, dite a vestrù; a mea è detta*, "Fable, little fable, tell yours; mine is told." Wolof storytellers use many endings to a *leb*, or tale. She or he may finish with, *Fi la leb dohé tabi ca gex*, "This tale passed here and entered the sea." Another common Wolof ending is *Bakan bu ko jeka fon tabi ajana*, "Whoever first understands it, will enter heaven." One of my favorite endings is commonly used to complete French folktales from the Languedoc region, "I've been through a little mouse hole; my tale is finished." As is true in many cultures, Yoruba audiences cheer when they are pleased by a well-told story. ■

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Michael J. Caduto, based in Norwich, Vermont, travels widely as a presenter of environmental and cultural performances, speeches, and workshops. In 1984, he founded PEACE®, Programs for Environmental Awareness and Cultural Exchange. The storyteller has written and co-authored 10 books.

To order books and music and to contract programs please contact: PEACE®,

Michael Caduto, P.O. Box 1052, Norwich, Vt. 05055; phone 802-649-1815.

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gazine 3/97 Co-author of *Keepers of Earth's*
Keepers of *Animals*

Earth Day Word Search

Can you find all sixteen words?

reduce, reuse, recycle, planet, Earth, pollution, compost, flowers,
tree, garbage, water, conserve, environment, green, April, ecology

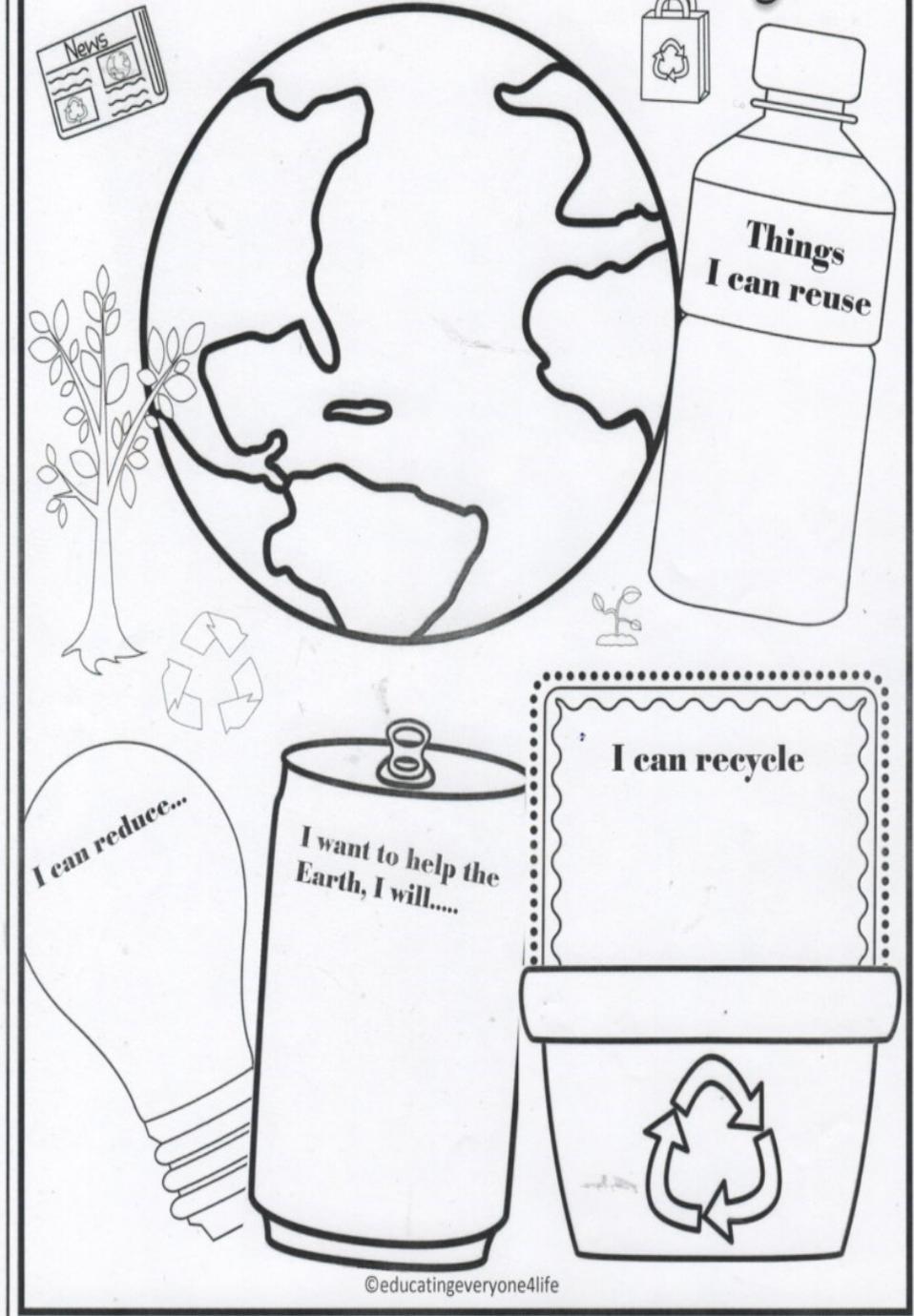
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 TheHappyTeacher

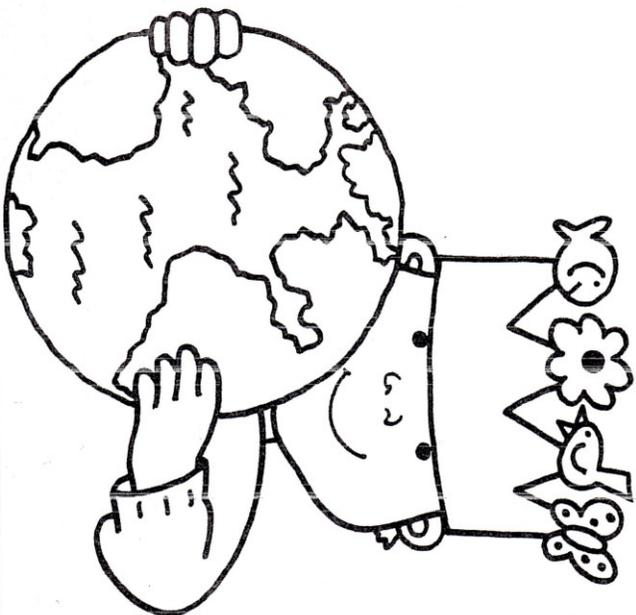


Earth Day



HEARTH DAY CROWN

Our Earth's a special planet
that spins around the sun,
Keep it clean and treat it well,
it's home to everyone!



HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED

- Construction paper (assorted colors including green)
- Child safety scissors
- White craft glue
- Stapler

HERE'S 1

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glue:



HERE'S WHAT YOU DO



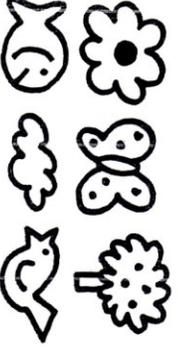
Cut green construction paper 8 3/4" x 24" (22 cm x 60 cm). Cut long, pointed triangles around paper.



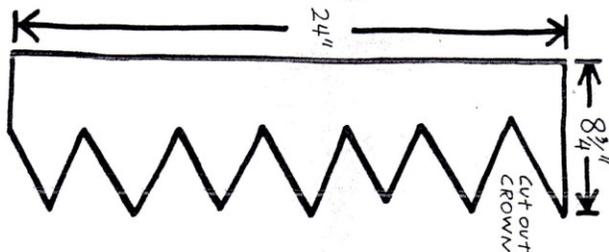
Cut flowers, butterflies, trees, fish, sun, clouds, and birds from assorted colors of construction paper. Glue onto points of crown and let dry completely.



Wrap crown around head and staple crown edges together.



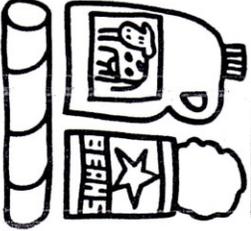
Cut out objects to glue on crown points



Fit crown on head and staple ends

MORE BIG FUN!

★ Look closely at the things we throw away. Can you think of a way to use them again?



★ Make a list of things you can do to save the earth. Then, ask your family to help you.



★ In a box, save things such as seashells, shiny ribbon, pretty paper, old greeting cards, fabric scraps, and yarn. Then, recycle them in art projects.