

Legends

Grades 4-6

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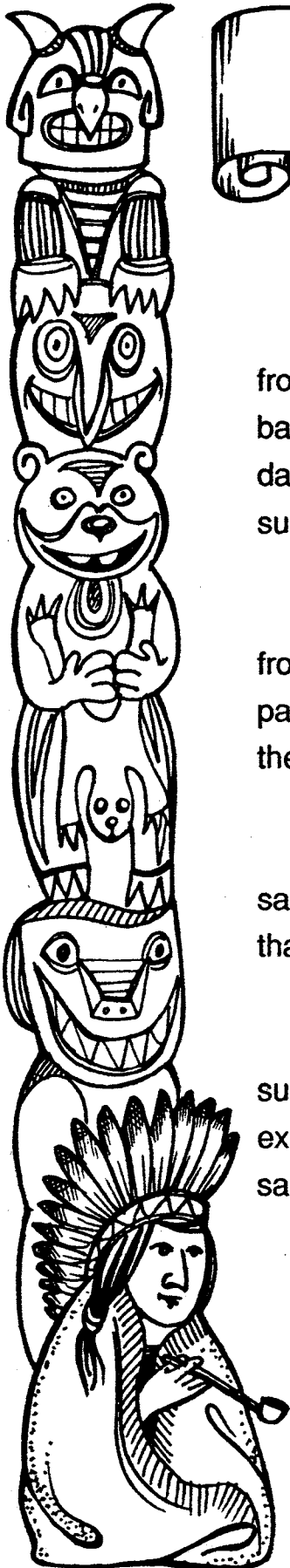


LEGENDS



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LEGENDS



Information Card #1

Folklore is the beliefs, customs and traditions passed on by people from generation to generation. Folklore consists of folk stories such as ballads, fairy tales, legends and myths. It also includes arts and crafts, dances, games, nursery rhymes, proverbs, riddles, songs, superstitions, holidays and religious celebrations.

Folklore does not have to be written down and is often passed from person to person orally. Legends are stories that have been passed down in this manner. They have been around for as long as there have been children that ask, "why?".

The origin of legends are most often attributed to natives. It is said, that a tribe sat around a fire at night while the elders told stories that explained the unexplainable.

Whenever they saw something that they did not understand, such as, why skunks have a smell, they made up a story that explained it. Often, there are many different stories to explain the same phenomenon.

Traditionally, legends are used to explain something in nature such as animal traits, trees, weather, and so on.



LEGENDS

How Birch Bark Got Its Marks



Once upon a time, birch trees were plain white. The bark was smooth and pure. One fall morning, a native left his wigwam to go hunting. He hunted for a while. Finally, he caught a big deer and brought it back to his home.

The native knew that winter was coming soon and he wanted more meat to get him through the winter. But, he knew that if he left the meat alone, an animal would steal it.

A birch tree was dozing nearby. So, the native asked the tree if it would guard his meat while he returned to the forest to hunt. The tree sleepily agreed to watch the meat. Happily, the native continued his hunting.

The sun was shining brightly that day and the birch tree lazily returned to a deep slumber. Some animals in the nearby woods saw the unguarded meat lying out near the wigwam. They pounced on their dinner ravishingly.

They picked the meat off the deer until there was nothing but white bones gleaming in the sunlight.

When the hunter returned, and saw nothing but bones where he had left his deer, he shouted at the birch tree, "What are you doing? My meat for winter is gone!"



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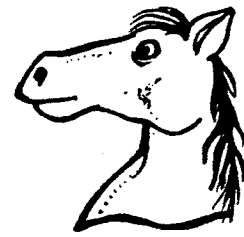


The birch tree awoke with a start just in time to see the angry native running toward it with a large branch from a pine tree. As he whipped the tree with the branch, the needles scratched the bark. Some needles got stuck into the tree.

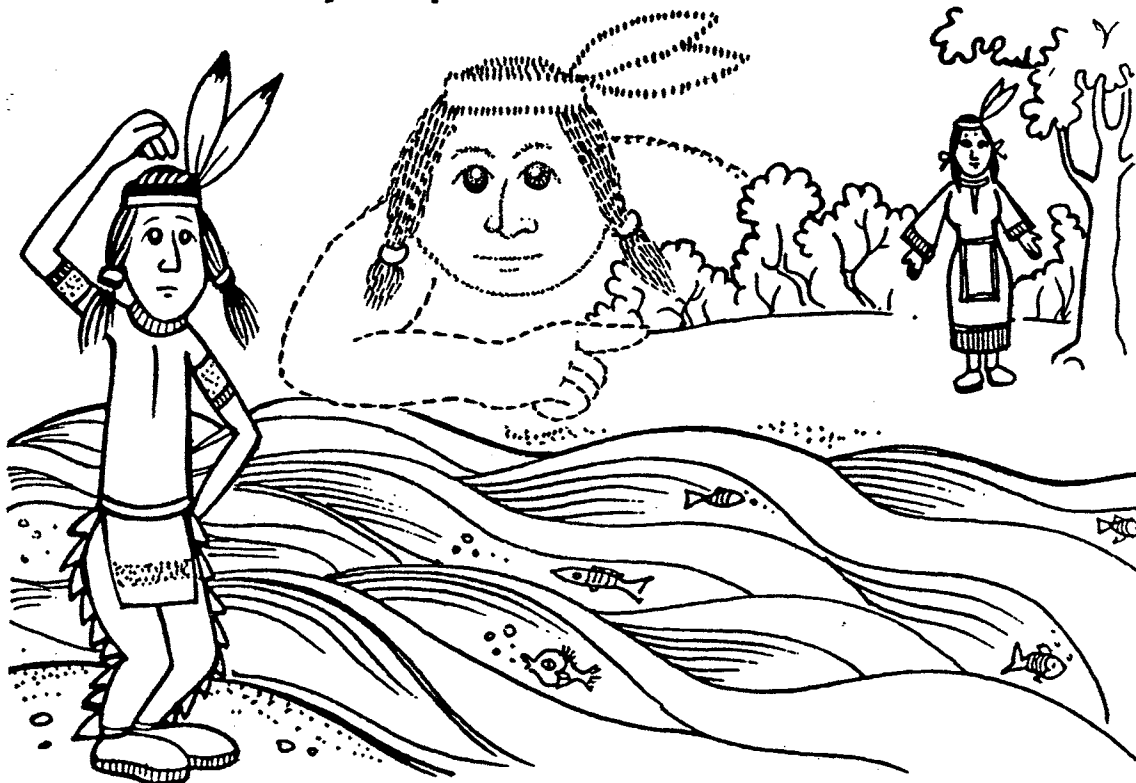
From that day on, birch trees had the scars on their bark from the pine needles so all the creatures of the forest would know that the birch tree had disappointed the native.



LEGENDS



Why People Do Not Live Forever



A great Spirit created the world. He made the earth, the trees, the mountains, the oceans and the animals.

He saved his greatest creation for last. This creation was a man called Nagatara. He lived on the Earth for thousands of years experiencing one adventure after another. He was as happy as he could be, except he felt lonely.

The Spirit was pleased with his creation, Nagatara, and he wanted to reward him for all the good he had done on the Earth.

He sent Nagatara a message to go to the river and walk across it. Nagatara was told not to stop until he reached the other side. There, a reward was waiting for him.

Nagatara walked and walked until he found the river. The water in the river was rushing by very quickly. It looked very cold and very deep. Nagatara was afraid and hesitated.