

## Writing and Sculpting Using Native American Storytelling and Symbols

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### **Introduction:**

Storytelling, most of us can tell a story, but is it a relevant story or told well, not always? Some people can make a story funny with extraordinarily little effort, but others have a tough time telling funny stories. Some people can express a lot of feelings in their stories, but others are unable to produce the right words. The real struggle starts when we are asked to write those stories down. Imagine if you are a 4th grade special education student, the struggle is even more. What makes storytelling important? There are many reasons: “Storytelling is a fundamental human experience that unites people and drives stronger, deeper connections. From the earliest recorded history, storytelling was a method used by cavemen to communicate, educate, share, and connect.”<sup>1</sup> “Storytelling is a powerful method for learning.”<sup>2</sup> “We learn from observations, first-hand experiences, and by sharing those experiences through stories.”<sup>3</sup>

Storytelling to Native Americans is a way of life. They use stories, including legends, folktales, myths, and fables. “They tell these stories for many reasons: to recount the history of the people, to tell where they came from, or to relate the exploits of a particular hero. Often stories are told to educate children about cultural morals and values. Stories also help to explain the supernatural and peculiar aspects of animals and the environment. The stories of an Indian group make that group unique, but stories will be known only as long as they are told. (“American Indian Storytelling | NCpedia”) When someone ceases to tell a story, part of the cultural knowledge is gone.”<sup>4</sup>

The stories that are told are almost never written down, and if they are written down or recorded, they are not written or recorded in their entirety. They are passed down from generation to generation by elders in the group. The stories also pass down values, teach morals, and teach children to be obedient by telling them stories that tell of consequences for unruly behavior. Some stories are only told at a certain time of year—most often only in winter and are a way to pass down culture and values but also are a source of entertainment during the long months of winter. In the Hopi, they keep the origin stories of the clan's secret because it is a source of their strength. There are other tribes that believe that by telling the stories to outsiders they will shorten their lives. “Tribal elders used stories as a medium to pass down cultural values to future generations. Mythologies teach and instill the principles, morals, and belief systems of a society in those who are

listening. Stories are powerful Native American tools, and the Storyteller Doll is a means of connecting to the storytellers and doctrines of a specific tribe.”<sup>5</sup>

Native American stories involve a lot of symbols, there are stories that include animals, Kokopelli, the sun, arrows, and many other things. These symbols are especially important to the stories because they help to explain things that have happened. These symbols also help Native Americans understand why things happen, they are used as ways to predict what will happen in the future as well as explain things that happened in the past. In the book *Spirits of the Earth, A Guide to Native American Nature Symbols, Stories, and Ceremonies*, by Bobby Lake-Thom, the author tells a story about driving on the highway and seeing a hawk. He then tells the person driving to slow down because there will be trouble ahead, as they get to the top of a hill a cow walks out from the side of the road. The driver was able to avoid an accident because he had slowed down because of the hawk. “The sun is regarded as a father, or Father Sky, to many groups in the Southwest and Hopi babies are still presented to the Sun God Tawa, who is told that a new life has begun.”<sup>6</sup>

Fig. 1: Storyteller doll



Image Credit: Courtney Cleghorn

The storyteller dolls were first made in 1964 by Helen Cordero in the Cochiti Pueblo of New Mexico. The storyteller sculptures that Cordero made were based on her grandfather that was known for being a storyteller. He was often seen telling a story with children sitting on his lap or close to him. The clay dolls are made with their mouths open to symbolize that they are singing or telling a story. Their laps, hair, and arms are covered with smaller figures that look like children.

“Among many native groups, there was, traditionally a seasonal calendar for storytelling, setting a rhythm of learning. In some cultures, winter was a time for stories; in others, stories about history might be told anytime, but other stories were reserved for special times. Through stories, the ways of the ancestors were made real for children, and the world around them became a powerful place. Stories taught a problem-solving and lessons about life. There were humorous stories and adventure stories of great deeds.”<sup>7</sup> In the book written by Richard and Tom Hill *Growing Up Indian* they discuss different definitions of origin stories. They define these types of “(Origin stories) that teach us what kind of people we hope to become, what kind of contribution we hope to make, what kind of legacy we hope to pass on to our children.”<sup>8</sup>

In the fourth-grade curriculum there is an English Language Arts Unit on Native Americans. There is also a unit that focuses on writing a myth or legend. Neither of the units goes into the symbolism of the creation stories or the myths that Native Americans use to explain things that happen. Two things not covered in either unit is information on creation stories and myths and how these stories continue to be told through the patterns that are used in the pottery that they make as well as other types of artwork that they make either to use or to sell. Both units focus on authoring a story about something that happened long ago and do not focus on how they still use the symbols from the past to explain what is happening now and to look to the future.

This unit will focus on getting students to not only write, but they will have to understand themselves and what represents them. The goal of this unit will be to have a short story that explains them and how they came to be who they are today and what they hope for in the future. The students will also have to design a bowl or another clay piece of artwork with their symbols on it to share with the class. To complete the project the students will have to interview their families to get information about some family history. During the interview they will ask their family about the kind of animal they would associate with the student. The students will also be looking at what different animal symbols mean and think about how those animals represent them. A student that is smart and jokes around a lot might consider themselves to be a trickster like the coyote. Another student might identify with the bear because they think of themselves as strong. If a student wants to use a bear paw as a symbol of themselves it is a sign of a good omen. If a student thinks of themselves as smart, and a fast thinker they will identify with the raven. Another student may use an arrow to show that they are protective of themselves or others, but another student that have been in a fight with someone may want to use a broken arrow as their sign for peace.

## **Demographics**

Red Clay Consolidated School District is in Northern New Castle County in Delaware, the district includes urban and suburban settings within its borders. The district has 28 schools that service about 15,000 students. 18.5% of the students in Red Clay Consolidated School District are Special Education Students.

Cooke Elementary is the newest school in the district and has 656 students (2018-2019 data). Demographics for the school year 2018-19, 5.64% of students were African American, 0.3% of students were American Indian and Hawaiian, 8.7% of students were Asian. Hispanic/Latino students account for 14.2% of students and Multi-Racial Students comprise 4.7% of the student body. 66.5% of the students in the school were White. Other student characteristics include 12.2% English Language Learners, 13.4% Low-Income students, and 10.6% Special Education students.

I am a Special Education Teacher and primarily instruct students in 4th and 5th grades. For the 2020-21 school year, there will be 20 special education students in those grades, 40% of those students are African American or Hispanic/Latino. I pull students out of their regular education classroom for small group instruction, but I collaborate with the grade level teachers so I can teach many of the same concepts that are being taught in the general education classroom. I teach reading, math and writing in a small group setting.

## **Rationale**

While most of us write something every day, whether it is an email, text, a scribbled note, or a list of things to be done, but do we tell stories about who we really are and the symbols that could represent us? No, our minds go blank and we are not able to think about who we are or what our story is. When we write we really do not think about that writing is like talking to someone and telling them a story. For the most part when we ask students to write we want them to tell a story that someone else would be interested in reading. So, we tend to tell them that writing is a way to tell stories about things that have happened to us or things that we want to happen. What about the stories that are told that are myths that explain how something happened, how do they fit in with our writing and storytelling? Native Americans use these types of stories to explain many different things that have happened. The stories are also used to teach children to behave. “People say that the myths have been, and still are a reflection of their culture, presenting an enduring system of values on which they continue to base their lives.”<sup>9</sup> In this unit I want my

fourth grade Special Education students to get to know themselves and be able to tell who they are not only through writing but through using symbols that represent them.

Many of these students fight when it is time for writing because they are convinced that they cannot write. They also have problems with reading because it is more difficult for them, and by 4th grade, a lot of them have given up trying to improve their reading skills and writing skills. One reason I feel that has contributed to the students lack success is that many of them move into the school in the middle of the year or they move out, so there has not been consistency with reading and writing instruction for these students. When a student is pulled out of a classroom or thrown into another classroom in the middle of the year it is a difficult adjustment. The adjustment is not just making new friends, there is also the problem of catching up with what the new class is learning. Some students might make this adjustment easily, but many will find the adjustment difficult and will fall farther behind. If they are moving to a different school, they may even have a different curriculum, so they will be playing catch up for the rest of the school year. The students become frustrated and have a lack of desire to succeed.

Another issue with the Special Education students that I teach is that they are pulled out of their regular class and are taught writing by someone else. This is a problem because when they go back to their class, they are frustrated by the fact that they do not know what is going on in the class and they start to feel frustrated. The students then feel like they must do two different assignments and not just one. This frustration leads to the students failing to complete any of the assignments. The only way to solve the problem is to talk to all the teachers and students involved and make sure all the parties involved are on the same page when it comes to the assignments. Since all students learn differently having them work on something that they want to do will help them to want to do better work.

Once the frustration is eliminated by discussing the problem with all involved, then the students can be free to create something that is wonderful and all their own. By writing, drawing, and sculpting a creation, myth, or fable story the students will have more ownership over their writing and will care more about what they are writing, because it is their story and artwork.

### **Writing Strategies**

With the Special Education students that I teach, I have only had minimal success with getting the students to write. I have tried giving them story/sentence starters and I only get a couple of words out of them. I have tried giving them a picture and having them

describe what they see, usually with this method I get a list of items in the picture. I have also tried giving the students a quick write and having them write for only 5-10 minutes. I have had better success with this because the students see that there is an end in sight. Graphic organizers are useful but need a lot of instruction on how to use them. After reading the book *The Writing Thief*, by Ruth Culham, a quote sticks in my mind, “We should teach children that writing is thinking and, as such, that it’s never easy, always messy, yet ultimately satisfying to get right. It is satisfying because the writing they do matters to them. Students should always know and embrace the relevance of what they compose from the onset.”<sup>10</sup> I also tell my student that writing is like talking and that if they can talk and tell a story they can write the story. One technique that I have found that works with my students is to ask them questions about their writing so that they can answer the questions and more details to their writing. Trying to get students to buy into what they are writing is the key to getting them to write. That buy-in can be as simple as giving them an option on how to complete the task. I have several students that if I give them the option to illustrate their story, they will be able to write more. The reason for this is simple, they need an incentive, and if the incentive to write more is that they can illustrate when they have completed their writing then, that is the incentive that they need.

I like to use mentor texts when I teach writing, because it gives the students an example of skillful writing. Mentor texts can also give students ideas of things to write about. The students are also engaged in the text for a while and can ask questions and get clarification before they go and write on their own. I will be using creation stories, myths, and fables from different Native American Tribes to help the students understand why the symbols are important. “The emergence myths are the most sacred to many of the Southwestern peoples. A general emergence myth might be told to children, while the real story may only be revealed when a person is initiated into the kiva.”<sup>11</sup> I will also be writing, drawing, and making my own design along with the class, by doing this we can talk about the story and they can see the distinct parts of writing. We can see how the symbols show the details in the story, without the student having to put the words on the paper.

I want to change the way my students think about writing and drawing and make it more fun for them to do. To do this I will start by using one of the mentor texts that are used in the fourth-grade curriculum, *Three Native Nations* by John Manos. The students will read the book with their class, but we will reference the book when reading the short stories in the activities. Together the students and I will look at the information in the stories and talk about the symbols that are talked about for each Native Nation. This book will be one of the stories that I will use. The stories that I will use in the activities will

correspond with the Native American groups that are featured in *Three Native Nations*. The fourth-grade writing prompt that the students are supposed to write is: after reading *Three Native Nations*, decide which tribe you would want to be a part of, and write about why you want to be part of that tribe. Since I teach special education students, I can change the writing prompts so that they are more in line with what is written in the student Individual Education Plans (IEPs). So, I am going to have them work on a story that is either about them or a myth about something that the student does not understand, or a fable that gives a moral about why the student should behave in a certain way. We will look at symbols that the Native Americans use in their artwork and have the students author the story using these symbols in their writing.

### Questioning

To get students to develop their characters, I am going to use the Stanislavski system for acting to help students get their characterization. Even though his system uses ten questions to help an actor get into a character. I will only be using four of the questions to help the students develop their characters. These four questions can be used by the writers to help them figure out who their character is and what they want it to do. His questions start with who and I? The first thing that a writer must do is ask themselves who the character is, and to figure out what the character likes or dislikes, what they look like and how they behave. The next question is, where am I? This question tries to get the student to think about their surroundings and describe them. What symbols will the student use to illustrate their story? Will they use a bear as a sign of strength and wisdom or a coyote as a sign of a trickster? When is the story happening? Is the next question, the author must decide is if the story is happening in the future, the past, or the present? The question, what must I overcome, addresses the action in the story, and it is important for us to have a clear idea of what he wants his character to overcome. It is also important to have the students take on the role of an animal or even a tree or a stalk of corn when they are authoring their stories. By taking on a role the students can see the story from a different viewpoint, and it may make the writing process easier.

There are other questions that I will use when meeting with students or having other student's conference with them. I ask the students these questions when I conference with them to help them add more details to their writing. All the questions that I use when clarifying content and ideas are open-ended. Some examples are: I do not understand this part, what are you trying to say? What was, this person doing, when you were...? Who else was there? Where does the story happen? Describe person, place, or thing. What else do you remember? What happened before...? What happened next? How did you feel when this happened? What was going on around you when...was happening? What were

the characters saying to each other? I also have the students' pair with each other and ask each other to clarify questions. They can use the same questions that I do, or they can make up their own. I have found that it is easier for the students to think of the questions if there are some questions written out for them in advance.

## Setting

Setting is an important part of writing because it helps the reader to visualize where things are happening. My students read and think about where stories are taking place, daily, but when it comes to writing a description of a place, they are only able to produce a couple of sentences. Since they will be drawing and then sculpting a bowl or plate, it is more important for them to figure out the setting before they get started. It is important for them to draw what they see in their minds as they read or write, this will help them be more descriptive.

## Characterization and Dialog

In the book *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott, she says that it takes time to get to know your characters when writing a story, and that you may not like them. "Bad things happen to good characters, because our actions have consequences, and we do not all behave perfectly all the time."<sup>12</sup> It is important for students to understand that they must develop all the characters in a story and to think about what it is about them that make them interesting. In class, we spend often talking about character traits when reading stories, and how important it is to understand each character, so this is not a new concept, but it is exceedingly difficult for students to do on their own. The Stanislavski system, from above, will also be used to help the students to think about characterization. My students tend to write one-dimensional characters. To make the characters more dimensional, it is best to add a dialog to the writing. The students will be encouraged to write like they talk with slang, contractions, or the dialect that they use. They may like this form of writing better than the formal writing that we usually make them write.

## Objectives

Students will draft a story, that is either a creation story, a myth, or a fable. If they decide to write a creation story the story will be about a time in their life that was either real or imagined but shaped who they are as people. If they decide to write either a myth or fable, they will decide on something that they do not understand and could be explained as a myth. If they decide on a fable they will think about a time when they were in trouble and how they could have done things differently or what they learned from the experience. They will start the writing task by listening to and deconstructing mentor



texts, mini-lessons, and graphic organizers. For the final part of the project the students will use modeling clay to make either a small pot that they can carve the symbols that they used in the story on or they will press the clay out into a flat shape and will carve the symbols.

The first thing that the class will do is that we will listen to or read mentor texts together, so that they can understand why details are important when writing. I will also be using the mentor texts as models of Native American Myths, fables, and creation stories. The texts will be used to model how the stories are organized. I will have the symbols that are used in each of the stories that I read to them cut out so the stories will be more concrete and easier for them to follow. We will talk about the characters as we read the story, and how to use questions to improve your writing. We will also use a graphic organizer to outline the characters in the stories and what their significance is to the story. We will also outline the plot in the story and will talk about the action and the ending and how those actions play into the ending of the story. The mentor texts that I will be using are *How the World was Made a Cherokee Story*, by Brad Wagon and Alex Stephenson, *Spirits of the Earth A guide to Native American Symbols, stories, and Ceremonies*, by Bobby Lake-Thom, *Arrow to the Sun*, By Gerald McDermott, *The Girl Who Helped Thunder and Other Native American Folktales of the World*, retold by James Bruchac & Joseph Bruchac, Ph.D., illustrated by Stephano Vitale, and *Native American Stories*, told by Joseph Bruchac.

Students will listen to mentor texts together so that they can understand why the use of details is important when writing and drawing. We will discuss the symbols used in the different stories and how those symbols are used repeatedly in different Native American stories. While reading the short stories to them, we will be filling in the various parts of a graphic organizer. The mentor texts will be models of the various parts of writing. An example would be using a graphic organizer to model the beginning (introduction), problem (conflict), middle (climax), solution (resolution), and the end (conclusion). I will model writing the information on a graphic organizer for all the stories that we use.

After listening to the books, and the short stories, the students will start recording ideas on a graphic organizer. The students will organize their ideas using the words First, Next, Then, and Last on one side of the paper in big type, and there will be lines underneath, so the students can write. Since I will be drafting a story along with them so that I can model the activity, I will tell the kids a synopsis of my story that I am going to write. Using the same graphic organizer that the students will be using, I will fill it in as I tell them the story. I will leave out a lot of details, so the story does not make a lot of sense. The class will then have to ask me questions so that I can fill in what happened and

why. I will record the questions as they ask them, so that I can give them a list of questions to ask later. After the class has asked questions, I will fill in more details on the graphic organizer. Some of the questions will include, what do the symbols mean? What have we learned? What is the message in the story? Then, I will begin to draft my story as a model. While I am writing, I will be modeling how to write an introduction and a conclusion, and I will also be editing as I go along so that the students can see that it is acceptable to have someone look at their writing and change it. After each draft, I will read my story to the class and have them ask me more questions about the events.

After having peers review their work the culminating activity will be that the students will have a story as well as a plate or bowl with symbols on it to help them tell their stories. Some of symbols that are in the stories that will be in the stories that we will read are: birds, beaver, turtle, bear, water beetle, buzzard, coyote. There are also other symbols that will be in the stories. The sun, spider, darkness, creator, the four corners of the Earth are all in the reading that we will be reading and discussing.

## Symbols

Birds are important in Native American stories. In the story *How the World Was Made a Cherokee Story*, by Brad Wagon and Alex Stephenson, the Cherokee believe that the Earth was an Island that was floating and was held up by four ropes. The animals lived on a rock and it was too crowded, they decided that they needed more room to live. The birds were sent out in all four directions to try to find dry land to live on. In the same story the beaver plays the role of the wise animal that tells everyone what they should do. The water beetle goes down in the water and finds mud and brings it back up to the surface, but the mud was too soft to live on so the buzzard flies down to the mud, that will become the Earth, and flaps his wings to dry the mud. As he becomes tired his wings drag in the mud where his wings hit the Earth valleys are made, and when he flaps his wings up, he makes mountains. Finally, the beaver tells the animals that if they wait seven days and seven nights, they would be able to live on the Earth. When they went to live on the Earth the animals find that it is too dark, that is when the Creator makes the sun. In this story there are many different creatures that have great significance to the story. The beaver is intelligent, the buzzard is helpful, and the water beetle is resourceful.

In another Cherokee story *The Land of the Great Turtles*, by Brad Wagon and Alex Stephenson, the turtle plays a leading role in the story. The Cherokee live on an island and to stay there they must take care of the sea turtles that lay their eggs on sand. The children are the ones that are supposed to watch after the turtles, because the men and women must hunt and fish, and take care of things about the home. One day, one of the

children decides to swim out to a turtle and sit on them while the turtles are resting. Of course, as soon as one child decides to do this more children decide to mess with the turtles. The children were warned to leave the turtles alone because something bad could happen if they mess with them. All was well for a while until one day all the children are sitting on the turtles and it starts to get late in the day. As the sun starts to go down the children find that they are stuck to the turtles and the turtles dive under the sea. This is when the wise old man tells the people that to get their children back, they must leave the island, and they are only able to take three things with them. They decide to take corn, fire, and tobacco. When the adults decide to leave the island, they can get the children back. This story is one that has a moral and could be used to teach, respect for elders.

Kokopelli, is one symbol that has been around for more than 1,800 years. Drawings of Kokopelli have been found on cave walls that date back to 200 AD. The hunched back flute player plays a key role in many Native American stories. *Kokopelli Drum in Belly*, illustrated and interpreted by Gail E. Haley, tells the story of Kokopelli and the Ant People. The story starts with the Ant People living in the darkness of the Earth, they are listening to the Mother Earth's heartbeat. Another symbol that is used is that the Ant People mark the four corners of the world. Eventually the Ant People run out of space and are tired of living in the dark. Kokopelli offers to lead them into another world, so they follow him. The first world that they come to is the Red World. The Ant People run into the Cicadas, and Cat People, and became afraid, but because Kokopelli had the Mother Earth heartbeat in his belly the Ant People were okay. Again, they set out the four corner stones. Kokopelli moves them on to the Yellow world there they run into the snakes. Kokopelli then takes the Ant People to the Blue World. In the Blue World there are mountains, rivers, fish. Kokopelli gives the Ant people seeds for corn, beans, squash, and the bow and arrow. At this point Kokopelli tells the Ant People that they must not stay in the Blue World and must move higher. At this point the Ant People meet Grandmother Spider, the sun, the Cloud Spirits, and lightning bolts. When they Ant People emerge in the Green World, they are the first people and place the four corner stones to show the four corners of the Earth.

## **Teaching Strategies**

### Activity One

Look at the mentor text: *Three Native Nations* by John Manos. The first Nation that we will look at is the Iroquois League (Haudenosaunee). The Iroquois League was “established in either 1142 or 1451, the Five Nations Iroquois confederacy consisted of the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, the Cayuga's, and the Seneca's. When the

Tuscarora joined in 1712 the union adapted the name Haudenosaunee, which translates to mean “six separate Indian nations.”<sup>13</sup> In treaties and other colonial documents, they were known as the “Six Nations.” “While each tribe controlled its own domestic affairs, the council at Onondaga controlled matters that referred to the nation as a whole. Similarly, despite the fact that all spoke the same language, each tribe had a distinct dialect of its own. Thus, not only did the Iroquois provide a strong government and military base to protect their farmland, but they also formed one of the nation’s earliest and strongest diplomacies.”<sup>14</sup>

When looking at the information in the book there is a section on the symbols that the clans or families use. After looking at the symbols that the clans identify with, read the story *The Earth on Turtle’s Back* from the book *Native American Stories*, told by Joseph Bruchac.

Fill in the graphic organizer with First, Next, Then, and Last. Discuss with students' what characters are in the story. What is the sequence of events? Why is the turtle important to the Native Americans? Also, make a running list of the animals and symbols that are in each story. Are there symbols that go from one story to another? Do the symbols mean the same thing in all the stories?

## Activity Two

Look at the mentor text: *Three Native Nations* by John Manos

The second Native American Nation in the book *Three Native Nations* by John Manos is the Sioux (Lakota) of the Northern Plains. In this book there is a lot of information on the buffalo and why the buffalo was so important to the Sioux (Lakota). Discuss the reasons that the buffalo was so important with the students.

Then read the short story *How the Buffalo Came to Be* from the book *The Girl Who Helped Thunder and Other Native American Folktales of the World*, retold by James Bruchac & Joseph Bruchac, Ph.D., illustrated by Stephano Vitale.

Fill in the graphic organizer with First, Next, Then, and Last. Discuss with students' what characters are in the story. What is the sequence of events? Why is the buffalo important to the Native Americans? What other animal symbols are in the stories? What does the darkness symbolize?

## Activity Three

Reading mentor text: *How the World Was Made a Cherokee Story*, by Brad Wagnon and Alex Stephenson. Before reading the story, discuss with class what makes it difficult for some of them to author stories. What would make it easier for the students to draft a story? What are some ideas of things to write about? Write down their ideas before reading *How the World was Made a Cherokee Story*.

Read the story about how the world was created and discuss how these stories came about. Why were these stories created and why are they still around today? What makes these stories endure generation after generation of retelling? As you are reading the book fill out the graphic organizer that has First, Then, Next, and Last. Is there a moral or message to the story? What do we learn from reading this story? Also, while you are reading the story make a note of the characters that are in the story. Discuss with the class the symbols that can be used to illustrate the story.

#### Activity Four

Read the story *The Coming of Corn* from the book *Native American Stories*, told by Joseph Bruchac. After reading the story, discuss the significance of corn in the Native American culture. Is there a moral to this story, does it explain how something came to be, or does this story accomplish both?

At this point the students will start to draft their story. After the discussions in previous activities the students should have an idea of what symbols they will use in their story. They will use a graphic organizer to help them keep their ideas straight. The organizer will be First, Next, Then, Last. When they have their graphic organizer finished, this is an appropriate time to talk with them and ask questions about their ideas.

#### Activity Five

Read the story, *The Land of the Great Turtles*, by Brad Wagnon and Alex Stephenson. What makes this story different from the other stories that we have read? The reason this story is different is that there is a moral at the end of the story. Compare and contrast the stories. *The Land of the Great Turtles*, by Brad Wagnon and Alex Stephenson, and *How the World Was Made a Cherokee Story*, by Brad Wagnon and Alex Stephenson. What ideas are the same? What makes these stories different? They both tell of how the Earth was made, but in unusual ways. What are the differences?

In this activity the students will be illustrating their stories. During this activity, the students will draw their stories in a circle around the outside of a paper plate. Once they have a visual of the story the students will be able to continue writing and adding details. Items that will be needed for this activity: paper plates that can be drawn on, colored pencils or markers, and the graphic organizer that the students have filled out.

### Activity Six

Read the story *Kokopelli Drum in Belly*, illustrated, and interpreted by Gail E. Haley. Discuss with students: What symbols are repeated throughout the story? What is the significance of going from the dark to the light? Are there any symbols in the story that the students can use to describe themselves in their writing pieces? Before students start to carve their bowl have them think about all the symbols that they have seen and what they mean. Then have them write down the symbols that they will be using in their carving/sculpting.

### Activity Seven

Once the story is complete the students will make a small bowl or plate out of modeling clay. They will then carve or draw their symbols on the side of the bowl or around the outside of the plate. The items that will be needed for this activity include modeling clay that will dry, pencils for carving or plastic carving tools if available.

### Resources

Bruchac, James, and Joseph Bruchac. "How the Buffalo Came to Be." Essay. *The Girl Who Helped Thunder and Other Native American Folktales of the World*, 38–40. New York, NY: Sterling Children's Books, 2008.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts-Literacy-Writing that are covered in this unit are for 3rd through 5th grade. There are several standards that are covered in this unit, and some of the standards are the same for all three grades, so they



are grouped together. The standards that are for 3rd-5th grade include: Under Text Types and Purposes: ELA-W.3.3, W.4.3, W.5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. ELA-W.4.3. A, W.5.3.A. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3. B Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations. W.5.3.B, W.5.3.C Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events. W.5.3.D Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely. W.5.3.E Provide a conclusion that follow from the narrated experiences or events.<sup>15</sup>

Under *Production and Distribution of Writing*: ELA-W.3.4, W.4.4, W.5.4 With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.<sup>16</sup>

ELA-W.4.3.C, W.5.3.C use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events, ELA-W.4.3. D, W.5.3.D use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely, ELA-W.4.3. E, W.5.3.E provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events. ELA-W.4.5, W.5. with guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing, and ELA-W.5.3. B use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.<sup>17</sup>

## Notes

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