

# Native American and Greek Myths

## Summary

Students will define what a myth is and features associated with it. They will identify the myth with one of the seven constellations they read about. The student will write an imaginary myth, based in students' modern culture of today.

## Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 5

[Reading: Literature Standard 9](#)

## Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 4

[Reading: Literature Standard 9](#)

## Time Frame

3 class periods of 30 minutes each

## Group Size

Large Groups

## Materials

Bierhorst, John. Lightning Inside You: and other Native American Riddles. Use two riddles (not titled) on page 18.

Cochiti Pueblo poem, [The Scattered Stars](#) (pdf)

Taped Native American Indian music, *Canyon Trilogy*, by R. Carlos Nakai.

Overhead Projector

Transparency of the [seven winter constellations](#) (pdf).

Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Pastel colored paper to create a seven page "flip-chart foldable", alternating colored paper per page.

Notebook or writing paper

Retractable ball point pen, or other blunt point instrument to carve into coarse sandpaper.

5 X 7 sheet of course sand paper per student

Chart of [Native American Indian symbols, A-Z](#) (pdf),

NOTE: this chart lacks symbols for the letters "I" and "T". Students can create their own symbol for those letters if needed.

Petroglyph illustrations on rock walls in Nine Mile Canyon.

Postcards are available at the USU Eastern Prehistoric Museum or you can use personal, original photographs.

## Instructional Procedures

### Day 1:

Choose one song to play from the CD of Native American music *Canyon Trilogy*, by R. Carlos Nakai.

When it is over ask students the following questions:

Have you heard this type of music before?

Could you identify specific instruments?

How did it make you feel?

What did it make you think of?

Could you identify it as Native American Indian music?

Have the music playing quietly as you complete the rest of the Day 1 lesson.

Introduce the unit by defining what a myth is and the features associated with them. Explain that different cultures have different explanations for why things exist in the natural world. Also explain that these stories were carried on through generations to keep the explanation alive through storytelling.

Greek and Native American Indian myths will be used to explain why constellations exist and what they mean. Relate constellations to Greek Myth and Nine Mile Canyon petroglyphs to Native American Indian explanations.

Mention comparisons and contrasts of these two cultures and of the natural world to each. Also, bring to students' attention the wealth of Native American Indian culture in their local areas.

Present two Native American Indian riddles as an example of cultural thoughts for things existing in the natural world. Students will try to solve and explain the riddles presented:

*Riddle 1:* There are two people who look at each other all the time. Who are they?

*Answer:* The sky and the earth

*Riddle 2:* There is a blue bowl filled with popcorn. What is it?

*Answer:* The sky with its stars.

Verbally present a story based upon the poem, [The Scattered Stars](#) (pdf), with flannel board. Use die-cut flannel pieces to represent poem during its verses to explain the Pueblo Indian explanation for constellations.

Explain that various cultures created myths to explain the constellations. In addition to various Native American Indian explanations, there were the Greek explanations of constellations.

Show and identify the [seven winter constellations](#) (pdf) during the months of December-March with transparency on overhead projector and briefly describe its placement in the winter sky with respect to cardinal directions (east, west, north, south).

Return to use the flannel board and die-cut shapes of each constellation and its star pattern, to tell the myth and placement of the constellation in the sky by Greek myth.

Hand out seven sheets of colored paper to students and instruct them to create a flip-chart foldable.

Stack two or more sheets of paper so that the top edges are an equal distance apart.

Bring the bottom edges up and align the sheets so that all of the layers or tabs are the same distance apart.

Fold and crease well to form the Layered-Look Book.

Use glue or staples to hold the sheets together.

On each page, students will illustrate one of each of these constellations. Illustration can be placed on the left side of the page and directly across from the illustration on the right side of the page, a brief explanation of the Greek meaning/story of the constellation. At the bottom of each page, students will label the name of each constellation so they can easily find it for future reference.

Day 2:

Students will create a list of things from their culture today, that could represent them for future generations in the form of a myth. For instance, all forms of technology, the lifestyle of their families today, their education, careers, etc. Of these things, what would best represent the student for others to remember them by in the future?

Suggestions:

Culture traits-characteristics that are material or nonmaterial.

Material culture traits include-objects such as clothes, buildings, artworks, machines.

Written language is "material" culture trait.

Nonmaterial culture trait-practices and beliefs such as customs, ceremonies, spoken language, religion. Forms of greeting, shaking hands, hugging, bowing. Nonmaterial culture traits can be expressed through material culture. Paintings or literature made by people of a cultural group show groups' ideas of beauty. Spoken language is "nonmaterial".

Traits define a culture/society. When societies interact, they take culture traits from one another and use them as their own. This is cultural borrowing. This can be seen in clothing, music and sports (baseball, games).

Culture describes customs, ideas, skills, arts, tools that are different in each of the world's societies. Human society is organized group of people identified by its customs, traditions and way of life. Culture is learned by living in family and growing up as a member of society.

Ethnic group is group of people who have the same culture and share a way of life.

Students will then use their "flip-chart foldable" book to choose one of the winter constellations they liked the best, and recreate a new imaginative myth based in today's culture, to explain the existence of that chosen constellation making sure they include all the features of a myth.

Offer some suggestions to be included in the writing:

- describe why the star pattern of the constellation exists,

- its placement in the sky

- create a new name for it based in today's culture

- how it became a constellation

- why it is important in today's culture

- why they want it remembered in stories for future generations.

Stress use of story elements in the myth they create, i.e., setting, characters, plot, and resolution.

Oral presentation to whole class for those wishing to share their new myth.

Day 3:

Pass out small sheets of coarse sandpaper, the chart of Native American Indian symbols that correspond to the alphabet, a retractable ball point pen, or other blunt point instrument to carve into coarse sandpaper.

Students will etch/carve into the sheets of sandpaper with blunt edge instruments, their name using the Native American Indian symbols. This can be related to the local rock art symbols in Nine Mile Canyon.

Display finished products on a bulletin board arrangement and / or add to students' portfolio.

### Strategies for Diverse Learners

Students can work in pairs to complete the flip-chart foldable. The transparency of constellations can be left on for students to refer to as they create their flip-chart of constellations.

After students choose the constellation they want to write about, students can be grouped by who is working on a particular constellation and help each other discuss and write about their culture and apply it into a new imaginary myth.

Teacher can supply materials if students do not have basics such as markers, colored pencils, or crayons for illustrations.

### Extensions

If you are not near Price, Utah where Nine Mile Canyon is located, you can visit the [In the Canyon](http://www.ninemilecanyoncoalition.org/old/pictures.htm) Web site additional photos <http://www.ninemilecanyoncoalition.org/old/pictures.htm>

Perhaps you can take a field trip to the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum in Price, Utah, to view Native American Indian artifacts.

Museums near you may have the same thing, i.e. Green River, The Wesley Powell Museum or The

Edge of the Cedars in Blanding, Utah, and also San Rafael in Emery County.  
Encourage families to view the Winter constellations during the months of December-March with a spotting scope, binoculars, or telescope.

### Assessment Plan

Students will hand in their imaginative myth and teacher will assign points to it based on the rubric below.

Three paragraphs has 3-5 sentences each, depicting "story elements" (15 points)

Student included information about the following (10 points)

What a myth is

How the constellation was formed

Why the constellation is important to the culture

the new imaginary name of the constellation

Illustration of one winter constellation they are describing

Teacher edited for punctuation, capitalization, and spelling (5 points)

Total possible points: 30 points

### Bibliography

Lesson Plan adapted from Kathy Milburn, Carbon School District.

Bierhorst, John. Lightning Inside You: And Other Native American Riddles ISBN: 0590381954

Story telling flannel board, along with flannel die cuts to represent poem during storytelling (constellation illustrations can be enlarged and traced to create the flannel die cut pieces to use).

Other pieces can be created such as an Indian princess, a burlap type bag, golden stars to surround the constellations...use one's own imagination for creating additional flannel pieces to compliment the story.

Nakai, Carlos R., Canyon Trilogy: Native American Flute Music (Taped Native American Indian music)

Pueblo tale titled, "The Scattered Stars."

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