**Origin Stories Notes and Assignment**

A **creation story** is a symbolic narrative of a culture, tradition or people that describes their earliest beginnings, how the world they know began and how they first came into it.

It is in the nature of humans to wonder about the unknown and search for answers. At the foundation of nearly every culture is a creation myth that explains how the wonders of the earth came to be. These myths have an immense influence on people's frame of reference. They influence the way people think about the world and their place in relation to their surroundings. Despite being separated by numerous geographical barriers many cultures have developed creation myths with the same basic elements.

Many creation story begin with the theme of [birth](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_1.html). This may be because birth represents new life and the beginning of life on earth may have been imagined as being similar to the beginning of a child's life. This is closely related to the idea of a [mother and father](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_2.html) existing in the creation of the world. The mother and father are not always the figures which create life on earth. Sometimes the creation doesn't occur until [generations after](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_3.html) the first god came into being.

A [supreme being](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_4.html) appears in almost every myth. He or she is what triggers the train of events that create the world. Sometimes there are two beings, a passive and active creator.

Not all cultures imagine life starting on earth. Some believe that it originated either [above or below](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_6.html) where we live now. Still other myths claim the earth was once covered with water and the earth was brought to the surface. These are called [diver-myths](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_7.html).

According to some cultures [humans and animals](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_8.html) once lived together peacefully. However because of a sin caused by the humans they are split up. This [sin](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_9.html) is often brought on by darkness and is represented as fire. Other times the innocence of humans is [taken away by a god](http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_11.html).

**On the next pages,** record the elements listed above for each of the following Creation Stories taken from our textbook. Then, answer the stories that follow.

The stories can be found in this packet—the pages are noted below:

1. **Page , “The Earth on Turtle’s Back”**
2. **Page , “When Grizzlies Walked Upright”**
3. **Page , “The Navajo Origin Legend”**
4. **Page *, “Wenebojo and the Wolves”* and “*The Creation of the World”***

***Respond below to questions about the stories you were responsible for reading today.***

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **“The Earth on Turtle’s Back”** | **“When Grizzlies Walked Upright”** | **“The Navajo Origin Legend”** |
| Supreme Being: |  |  |  |
| Where did “earth” exist? Above, below or?  Describe: |  |  |  |
| Animal/  Supernatural characters: |  |  |  |
| Mother/Father  Character: |  |  |  |
| What it the peoples’ relationship with the Earth? |  |  |  |
| Describe the moral or lesson. |  |  |  |
| What does the story explain about the origins of the human race? |  |  |  |

1. **How do the animals in the myths exhibit human qualities?**
2. **How do the supernatural beings in the myths act?**
3. **What is the meaning of the Modoc custom of marking the site where an Indian was killed by a grizzly?**
4. **What do these stories tell us about the religious/spiritual beliefs of the people?**
5. **What are some similarities between the stories?**
6. **List some differences in the three stories:**
7. **What is the role of Nature in each story?**