Folktales from around the world
Welcome to the wonderful world of stories. Find out from famed Native American Joseph Bruchac how dogs became companions to the people. Discover from storytellers Won-Ldy Paye and Margaret Lippert why leopard has spots. And you won't want to miss how the mice escape the cat in Angel Vigil’s Los Tres Ratoncitos: A Chiste.

These stories, drawn from the farthest reaches of the globe, teach us valuable lessons about the differences of other cultures. Yet you will discover that the stories also show how we are very much alike. Whether trying to win a contest or wondering about a rainbow, we share similar fears and dream the same dreams. But most of all, we love a good story!

We hope this sampling inspires you to read many other tales from around the world. Maybe you’ll decide to try some storytelling yourself. When you are done with these stories, visit your library where you’ll find an even bigger world of stories.

We’ve also included some newspaper learning activities because the newspaper is always a source of exciting stories. As you read the newspaper you might get some terrific ideas for stories of your own!

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The Legend of the Irish Harp

One misty day, a young woman with black hair and the bluest of eyes was walking along the beach. She was idly collecting pretty pebbles and shells. The mists moved in and out from the water as she strolled, softly singing romantic songs to herself. She thought of her handsome husband as she sang.

She had just walked up to a patch of reeds when she heard music sweeter than anything she had ever heard in her life. She pushed past the reeds and there found the skeleton of a whale. The sweet music she was hearing was coming from the skeleton.

As she came along the side of the whale, she discovered that the music was caused by the wind singing ever so sweetly through the bones of the whale. The music was hypnotizing, and before the girl knew it she slumped to the ground and was lulled to sleep.

Her husband came home from his work in the fields expecting to find his young wife in their cozy kitchen brewing him a pot of tea. They enjoyed sharing a quiet cup of tea together at this time of day and telling each other the events of the day.

Time passed and his wife didn’t appear, so the man went out to search for her. He started along the beach, because he knew she enjoyed walking there. She must have had such a pleasing walk that she had forgotten how late it was. He saw her prints in the sand leading out toward the bay and followed them. He heard some unearthly music as he came near a patch of reeds. On the other side of the reeds, he found his dear wife peacefully sleeping beside the skeleton of a whale. He too saw that the enchanting music came from the wind on the whale bones.

The husband gently woke his wife up and together they reveled in the music. When the wind stopped blowing, the music stopped, but not before the husband had observed the principle behind the music.

Back at home, he secretly made a harp to imitate those sounds they had heard. When it was finished, he presented it to his wife with a flourish and a love song he sang and played for her. And that is how the first Irish harp came to be.


Check Out The Newspaper

1) The music in this story was soothing and relaxing. Can you find a good way to relax in today’s newspaper? Write a paragraph explaining your choice.

2) The husband and wife in this story had a really nice relationship. What makes it good? Relationships are a popular theme in literature and also in real life. Find a story about a good relationship in today’s newspaper. Write the reasons why it is so good.
Los Tres Ratoncitos: A Chiste

Once there were tres ratoncitos, “three little mice,” who lived with their mother. The mice lived in a small hole under a big fancy house.

Every day the mother mouse would leave the hole to go and search for food for herself and her children. The ratoncitos would cry out, “Mamá, why can’t we go out and look for food too? It’s always so boring just sitting here in our little hole.”

The mother mouse would patiently answer, “Because the world is full of dangers. The big gato is always waiting outside, waiting to catch a nice little mouse and eat him up!”

The three ratoncitos pleaded even more, “Ah, Mamá, you’re just trying to scare us. And besides, we’re too smart and too fast for any old gato to catch us. Please let us go with you.”

“No, you may not go and that’s final. Now stay here until I get back. And wish me luck in finding some food for us.”

The ratoncitos grumbled, “Oh, OK, Mamá. We’ll stay here and be good. Good luck.”

As soon as the mother mouse had left, one of the ratoncitos said, “You know, Mamá always has such a hard time finding food. Why don’t we sneak out and help her? I know she is just trying to protect us, but we’re almost grown up now, and it’s time we started helping out.”

Another ratoncito agreed and piped in, “Yeah! Let’s sneak out, find some food, bring it back and have it waiting for Mamá when she gets back.”

The third ratoncito agreed, “Good idea! Mamá will be so proud of us.”

So the three ratoncitos crept out of their hole and cautiously went looking for food. Very soon they were lucky and found some cheese that had been swept in a corner. As they struggled to carry it back to their hole, they did not notice a big mean gato sneaking up on them. When they did notice the gato it was too late—the gato had trapped them and was snarling with his big teeth and getting ready to eat them!

Suddenly, the mother mouse leapt between the gato and her baby ratoncitos. The gato was ready to pounce on the mother mouse when she reared up on her hind legs and began to bark like a dog, “Woof! Woof! Grrrr! Woof! Woof!”

As soon as the gato heard the sound of a dog barking it turned around and quickly scampered away.

Later, when they were all safe back in their hole the mother scolded the ratoncitos, “Do you see why I asked you to stay in the hole?”

The three ratoncitos sheepishly answered, “Yes, Mamá.”

The mother mouse held her baby ratoncitos close to her and lovingly told them, “One day you’ll be big enough to look for food on your own. There are still many more things you need to learn about the big world outside our hole. And one more thing about the lesson you learned today—now do you see why it’s good to know how to speak more than one language?”


Check Out the Newspaper

1) If you did not know that the word gato meant cat, you could probably figure that out from reading the rest of the story. By seeing how the word is used—reading the context—you can often figure out the meaning of a new word. Use the newspaper to find a new word that you do not know the meaning of. Try to stump your class by finding a word that no one (except the teacher) knows. If you can stump your class you get a point. Write the stumper words on the board. Play the game until there are at least five stumpers on the board. Try to define each one by using the context and then look each up in a dictionary. Write a sentence for each.

2) There are a few foreign words in this story. Can you find any words in today’s newspaper that come from another language?
In the court of Periander, king of Corinth, dwelt Arion, the greatest singer of tales. Arion was a great favorite of Periander.

“There is to be a musical contest in Sicily and I want to compete for the prize,” Arion told Periander.

“Stay with me. Be contented. He who strives to win in contests of all kinds may lose,” advised Periander. “Besides, I want you to stay here with me.”

“A wandering life is happiness for a bard. I want to share my talents and joys with others,” said Arion. “Besides, if I win the prize, my fame will be increased along with my pleasure at winning.”

Arion left Corinth for Sicily where he was undisputed winner of the contest. After a day of celebration, he left for Corinth on a Corinthian ship with his chest full of newly won riches and rewards. He was eager to share his victory and riches with his friend Periander.

The waters were calm, the breezes gentle, and the sky cloudless. It wasn’t the travel that was to prove dangerous. That came from the greed of men. Arion had taken a stroll on the deck, and he overheard the seamen plotting to kill him for his riches. There was nowhere to go to escape. The crew approached him with, “Arion, you must die! If you want to be buried onshore, surrender to us and die on this spot. Otherwise, throw yourself into the sea.”

“Take my gold if that is what you want, but spare my life,” argued Arion.

“No! You must die. Alive you would tell Periander, and we would never be able to escape from him. You must die!” they decreed.

“Then you must grant me one last wish,” he asked. “If I must die, I would like to die as I have lived, as a bard with my death song and my harp string winging their way in the breezes. Then I will bid farewell to life and go to my fate.”

Even these pirates were eager to hear such a famous musician and they agreed. Even the rude and crude admire beauty.

“I must dress in proper clothes for such a performance,” Arion said. “Apollo would be disappointed to meet me unless I was clad in my minstrel raiment.” With this he dressed himself in his gold and purple tunic with graceful billows, his jewels on his arms, a golden wreath on his fair head, and exquisite perfume. He held his lyre in his left hand and struck it with an ivory wand.

Arion appeared to be inspired as he smelled the morning air and admired the glittering morning rays.

The seamen were entranced as Arion went to stand on the side of the vessel. He looked down into the deep blue sea and began to sing. He sang of his new life among the gods and wise ones. As the last notes of his harp strings vibrated in the air, he turned and leapt off the boat. His tunic floated like wings in the air. He soon was covered by the waves and gone from sight.

The evil crew felt safe and continued on their way to Corinth, feeling secure that their crime would not be detected.

What the crewmen did not know was that Arion’s music had enchanted the inhabitants of the deep to come closer to listen, and that dolphins followed the ship as if chained by a spell. As Arion started to float toward the surface of the water, a dolphin offered him its back. Arion mounted the dolphin, which carried him safely to shore.

At the spot on the rocky shore where Arion landed, there was later erected a monument of brass to preserve the memory of this amazing event.

After bidding farewell to the dolphin, Arion started his trip on foot to Corinth. He played and sang as he went, quite full of love and happiness. When he entered the halls of Periander, he was grateful for what he had—life and music. He told Periander what had happened and Periander ordered him to stay hidden so that when the evildoers came to report on their arrival, they would do so not knowing that Arion had been saved.

When the ship arrived in the harbor, Periander summoned the mariners before him. “Have you heard anything of my beloved friend Arion?” he asked them. “I am anxious for his return.”

“We left him well and prosperous in Tarentum,” they said. Just as they said that, Arion stepped forth and faced them. The criminals fell prostrate at his feet and cried, “We meant to kill you but you have returned as a god.”

“He lives,” said Periander. “He lives, the master of music. Kind heaven protects men such as him. You greedy murderers are lucky that Arion does not seek revenge. Be gone with you all. May your lives never experience the sights and sounds of beauty again.”

Arion had many more years left to him to create celestial music and sing the praises of the dolphins.


Check Out The Newspaper

1) Arion’s friend did not want him to compete in the contest but he did anyway. Competition motivates some people to try really hard. Do you think competition is a good thing? Debate this issue in your class and find examples about competition in the newspaper to prove your point and support your argument.

2) Who is more competitive – kids or adults? Read some editorials to see how they are written and then write one giving your opinion on this question.
The First Coconut Tree

Long ago on the islands in the Pacific Ocean, there were no trees. No one could even imagine what a tree might be. One day, on the tiny atoll of Ailing-laplap, a baby was born. Debolar was mostly a face on a very round tummy. He had no arms or legs.

Debolar’s older brother was embarrassed. “Kill it! Kill it,” he shouted to their mother, Limokare.

Limokare was unsure and asked the other women. “Who can explain why this strange child was born to me, malformed, and so ugly? Perhaps it is a spirit-child that will bring harm to all of us.”

As the baby stared up at her, Limokare saw that his eyes were full of cleverness and caring. She reached down to hold her baby.

“I cannot kill you. Sometimes when someone comes into the world unexpected and not understood, they are laughed at instead of valued. Grow, little round one, and let us see what is within you.” She cared for him as tenderly as she cared for his older brother. He was always hungry. He drank and drank the sweet milk from his mother. But he grew only rounder and browner, always with his middle full of milk.

One day Debolar said to his mother, “Bury me in the sand.”

“Bury you? But you will die!”

“No, no, mother, I will not die. Bury me in a shady place and each day bring clear water for me to drink.”

“Bury you alive? How can I do such a thing?”

“So I can live. I have been nourished by your milk and love. Now I must eat and drink of the earth and be warmed by the sun. I will grow and reach toward the clouds until my fingers can dance in the wind. Then every part of me will be useful. From me, our people will have satisfying food, roofs for their huts, strong rope for building boats and soft mats on which to sleep. My middle will always hold milk for the little children.”

Again he instructed his mother. “Care for these funny round children. Bury them in soft sand. Soon there will be dozens and then hundreds of my children and grandchildren. They will make their way to other villages. The ocean currents will carry them to faraway islands.”

Limokare shook her head but did as her son asked. She buried Debolar in the sand just outside the window of her hut. Every evening she brought him fresh spring water. Every day she looked for some change, some sign of life, but sadly she saw none.

One evening, when she was pouring a gourd of water, she saw a small, green sprout. She looked more closely. A thin, curled-up sprout had pushed through the sand. “How beautiful. But what are you? Could you really be my child, my Debolar?”

Limokare gave the folded leaf a name, drir-jojo, words meaning sprout (drir) and flying fish (jojo). The green shoot grew rapidly, changing size and appearance, and always growing tall toward the clouds. For each change, Limokare called Debolar a new name. Many of these names, ni, niyog, niu, and drir-jojo, are still used today.

Many months passed. Debolar grew into a towering tree. His trunk was strong yet supple like the sturdy legs of island children. He sprouted green branches or fronds that reached in all directions. His arms were sometimes quiet but often they were wild and noisy, swaying and laughing in the sea winds, dancing and chattering to his mother who sat beneath in his cool shade.

Limokare remembered what Debolar had once said. She told his words to the other villagers. “Every part of this coconut palm is useful to us. New fruit will continue to grow. Some we will plant and some we will eat. Some will float many miles to other islands. The long fingers of the fronds are strong and can be woven into mats, sails and even roofs. The oil in its meat can flavor our food and protect our skin. Honor this tree, this thing that began as an ugly round baby. Take care of him and he will serve us always.” And thus the coconut tree or ni became essential to the survival of life in the Pacific Islands.


Check Out The Newspaper

1) The coconut tree, the story says, became essential to life in the Pacific Islands. What is essential to your life? Can you find three essentials—things you really need to survive—in today’s paper? Then find three luxuries—things you really want but don’t really need. Write a sentence explaining each choice. Discuss your wants and needs with your class.

2) Skim the newspaper to find examples of ways in which trees are useful. How many products pictured come from trees?
Why Leopard Has Spots

Long ago, in the days when Leopard had a beautiful coat of solid gold, Leopard and Deer were friends. They lived in a little village with Spider, who was a great farmer. Every morning Spider walked to his farm. He worked all day planting, tending, or harvesting his crops. Every evening he cooked a huge meal, and because there was always more than he could eat by himself, he invited his friends Deer and Leopard to dinner.

One day, when Spider was cutting off a head of cabbage, he noticed a space in his row. Someone had taken a cabbage. The next day he noticed an eggplant was gone. Every day another vegetable disappeared from his farm. Sometimes it was lettuce or several carrots. Other times it was some corn or cassava.

At first Spider didn’t care, because he had so much. But when things started disappearing, he began to get mad. Spider went to Deer’s house and asked, “Have you been stealing vegetables from my farm?”

“No!” said Deer. “You invite me to dinner every evening. Why should I steal from you?”

Then Spider asked Leopard, “Have you been stealing from my farm?”

“No!” said Leopard. “You cook such a good dinner for us every evening. I wouldn’t steal from you, Spider.”

Spider went back home. But every day more of his vegetables disappeared. He got angrier and angrier.

Finally he went back to Deer’s house and said, “Please help me find the one who’s stealing my vegetables.”

“That’s easy,” Deer said. “Just make a trap. Dig a big hole right inside the gate to your farm. Make a huge fire in the hole, and let it burn down to hot coals. Then cover the hole with dry branches and dead leaves. When the one who’s stealing from your farm goes through the gate tonight, the branches will break, and he’ll fall into the hole and get burned.”

“You are smart,” Spider said. “Thank you for your help.” Spider hurried to his farm and did exactly what Deer told him to do. Then he went back to his home in the village.

That night, when everyone was sleeping, Deer got up quietly and sneaked out to Spider’s farm. He walked carefully around the dry leaves and branches that were covering the hole and stole some cucumbers. He took the cucumbers home and ate them. Then he ran to Leopard’s house.

“Leopard,” Deer called. “Wake up! Spider wants to see you.”

“Where is he?” Leopard asked sleepily.

“On his farm,” said Deer.

“Okay,” said Leopard. “I’ll go, even though it is the middle of the night, because Spider is my friend.”

Leopard ran to Spider’s farm. Deer followed him quietly. Just inside the gate Leopard stepped on the branches over the hole. The branches broke and Leopard fell WHAM! into the hole. The hot coals burned holes in his coat. “OWWW!” he howled. “Help me!” But no one heard him.

Deer was already on his way to Spider’s house. When he got there, he banged on the door. “Spider! Wake up! Come with me! The one who’s been stealing your vegetables fell into the trap and is getting burned.”

Deer and Spider ran to the farm. Someone was howling with pain. When Spider looked down into the hole and saw his friend Leopard, he was furious. “You lied to me, Leopard,” shouted Spider. “Now I see what’s going on! You’ve been stealing all this time!”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Leopard said. “Just help me get out of here!”

Spider reached down and Leopard grabbed his legs. He scrambled out of the hole and rolled in the dirt to put out the flames that were burning holes in his coat.

“I almost burned to death,” Leopard cried. “Why did you make a trap? Why did you tell Deer you wanted to see me?”

“Deer told me to make a trap,” Spider said. “And I never told him I wanted to see you.”

“You’re the thief, Deer,” said Leopard. “And you lied too. Look at me. Because of you, I’ve got holes all over my beautiful golden coat. You’re not my friend anymore. I’m going to eat you up!” Leopard leaped toward Deer, and Deer bounded off into the forest. Leopard raced after him.

Now wherever Leopard sees Deer, he chases him. And since that day, Leopard has black spots all over his beautiful golden coat.


Check Out The Newspaper

Can you find a comic strip character like each of the ones in this story? Find characters with some of the same attributes or characteristics. Which of the characters in the story is most like you?
The Story Stone

Long ago, there were no stories in the world. Life was not easy for the people, especially during the long winters when the wind blew hard and the snow piled high about the longhouse.

One winter day a boy went hunting. He was a good hunter and managed to shoot several partridge. As he made his way back home through the snow, he grew tired and rested near a great rock which was shaped almost like the head of a person. No sooner had he sat down than he heard a deep voice speak.

“I shall now tell a story,” said the voice.

The boy jumped up and looked around. No one was to be seen.

“Who are you?” said the boy.

“I am Great Stone,” said the rumbling voice which seemed to come from within the Earth. Then the boy realized it was the big standing rock which spoke. “I shall now tell a story.”

“Then tell it,” said the boy.

“First you must give me something,” said the stone. So the boy took one of the partridge and placed it on the rock.

“Now tell your story, Grandfather,” said the boy.

Then the great stone began to speak. It told a wonderful story of how the Earth was created. As the boy listened he did not feel the cold wind and the snow seemed to go away. When the stone had finished the boy stood up.

“Thank you, Grandfather,” said the boy. “I shall go now and share this story with my family. I will come back tomorrow.”

The boy hurried home to the longhouse. When he got there he told everyone something wonderful had happened. Everyone gathered around the fire and he told them the story he had heard from the great stone. The story seemed to drive away the cold and the people were happy as they listened and they slept peacefully that night, dreaming good dreams. The next day, the boy went back again to the stone and gave it another bird which he had shot.

“I shall now tell a story,” said the big stone and the boy listened.

It went on this way for a long time. Throughout the winter the boy came each day with a present of game. Then Great Stone told him a story of the old times. The boy heard the stories of talking animals and monsters, tales of what things were like when the Earth was new. They were good stories and they taught important lessons. The boy remembered each tale and retold it to the people who gathered at night around the fire to listen. One day, though, when the winter was ending and the spring about to come, the great stone did not speak when the boy placed his gift of wild game.

“Grandfather,” said the boy, “Tell me a story.”

Then the great stone spoke for the last time. “I have told you all of my stories,” said the Great Stone. “Now the stories are yours to keep for the people. You will pass these stories on to your children and other stories will be added to them as years pass. Where there are stories, there will be more stories. I have spoken. Naho.”

Thus it was that stories came into this world. To this day, they are told by the people of the longhouse during the winter season to warm the people. Whenever a storyteller finishes a tale, the people always give thanks, just as the boy thanked the storytelling stone long ago.


Check Out The Newspaper

1) Good stories have interesting characters, a good plot and vivid descriptions of the setting. Choose a photo from today’s newspaper that would make a good setting for a story. Write a very clear and vivid description of your photo.

2) Which of the news stories in today’s paper has the elements of a good story? Which has the most interesting characters and plot and setting?
**Spanish Rice - Hispanic Southwest**

2 tablespoons onions, chopped  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1/2 cup celery, chopped  
1 cup uncooked rice

**Directions:**
1. Cook onion, garlic, and celery in shortening or olive oil.
2. Add rice and brown slightly.
3. Add remaining ingredients.
4. Cover and cook over low heat. Check after 15 minutes, adding water if necessary. Cook until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed.


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**Camote (Sweet Potato Candy) - Mexico**

1 20-ounce can crushed pineapple  
1 16-ounce can sweet potatoes  
4 cups sugar  
1/4 cups flour  
Powdered sugar

**Directions:**
1. Cook pineapple over medium heat until tender, about 15 minutes.
2. Cool slightly. Then place in blender and blend on high for 10 seconds. Pour into mixing bowl.
3. Drain sweet potatoes, place in blender, and puree.
5. Mix together sweet potatoes and pineapple. Pour into 9-inch by 13-inch pan and refrigerate for several hours.
6. When mixture is firm enough to mold, roll spoonfuls into log shapes. Roll in powdered sugar. Refrigerate.


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**Humitas - South America**

8-10 ears of corn  
1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon strained b  
1/3 cup finely chopped  
1 small tomato, peeled, seeded, and chopped  
3/4 teaspoon salt  
1/3 cup corn flour

**Directions:**
1. Cut off "stem" end of corn and husk. Save the tender husks for later.
2. Clean corn and grate kernels of corn (about 1/3 cups grated corn.) Set corn aside.
3. Heat fat and sauté onion over medium heat until translucent but not brown. Add tomato and cook for several more minutes. Remove from heat.
4. Add grated corn and salt. Sprinkle with flour and mix thoroughly. Let sit for 30 minutes and stir occasionally.
5. On work surface overlap two corn husks to form a flat circle. Place a heaping tablespoon of corn mixture in the center of the husks. Fold the sides together and tie with strips of corn husk or kitchen string. Repeat until all humitas are assembled.
6. Place humitas in a steamer for 45 minutes. Let cool slightly, remove strings, and open husks before serving.

*Note: Humitas can be made several days in advance of serving. Variations: In place of corn, use mango or other fruits.*

**Sweet Almond Tea**
Taiwan

1/4 cup long-grain rice
3 ounces almonds
1 1/2 quarts water
1 cup sugar

**Directions:**
1. Rinse rice. Cover with water and soak for 4 hours.
2. Soak almonds in boiling water for 10 minutes. Remove skins.
3. Place rice, almonds, 2 cups water in blender. Puree.
4. Add 1 more cup water and blend for about 1 more minute.
5. Line a colander with cheesecloth and set in a large pan. Pour puree into the colander. Then pour remaining water over the mixture.
6. After the mixture has drained, gather the cheesecloth and squeeze out any remaining liquid.
7. Place pan over medium heat. Stir constantly until tea begins to bubble. Add sugar and stir until dissolved.

Serve hot.

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**Banana Fritters**
(West Africa)

1 1/2 cups flour
5 tablespoons sugar
3 eggs
1 cup milk
1/4 teaspoon salt
5 medium bananas
Oil for deep-fat frying
Cooking thermometer
Powdered sugar

**Directions:**
1. Put flour and sugar in a large bowl.
2. Beat in eggs, one at a time.
4. Peel bananas. Put in small, deep bowl.
5. Mash bananas well.
6. Stir bananas into flour batter. Let sit for 20 minutes.
7. Pour oil 3 inches deep into a large saucepan. Heat until it reaches 375 degrees F.
8. Put large spoonfuls of batter-covered bananas into oil. Fry until brown on both sides.
10. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve warm.

Serves 6.

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There once lived a king who was very bored. He had seen all of the jester’s tricks and heard all of the storyteller’s tales. So he decided to hold a contest as a way of amusing himself. Messengers were sent to every town where they shouted for all to hear:

Hold your hands up to the sides of your mouth like the old time criers used to do and SHOUT this!

“The king will give a golden apple to whoever can tell the biggest lie!”

Soon people began to arrive from all the corners of the kingdom to share their ridiculous stories.

You may want to think of other big lies instead of these to make the story your own. When you are describing the lies, have a very doubtful look on your face.

There was the fisherman who said he had just spent a year living underwater and the young woman who claimed to have ninety-five children!

The king enjoyed these tales but didn’t think there was one that stood out from the others.

As you say “a large pot,” make a circle in front of you with both hands as if to show the pot.

Then one day an old woman carrying a large pot appeared before the king.

When you speak as the king, hold your shoulders high so as to look king-like and look slightly down as if you are peering from your throne. Always face the audience. Point to the imaginary pot and put a strange look on your face as you say this.

He looked at her strangely and asked, “Do you need that pot to tell your story?”

When you speak as the old woman, put one hand on your hip and lean over a bit. Look up as if you are peering at the king on his throne. Use an old woman’s voice if you feel comfortable doing so.

So that you won’t continually have to say “the king said” or “the old woman answered,” get your body into a position to show which person you are each time before you speak.

Say this with total disbelief.

“Oh no, your Majesty,” she replied, “I need it to collect the pot full of gold you owe me!”

Speak with confidence each time you pretend to be the old woman.

“Oh no, sire. Don’t you remember? I lent it to you just two months ago.” (old woman)

Say this with great anger.

“Liar! I could sit here for the rest of my life and never hear a bigger lie!” (king)

Point to the imaginary king in front of you as you say “you” and to yourself as you say “me.”

“If that’s true, my Lord, then you owe me the golden apple.” (old woman)

Show with your voice and face that the king realizes he’s in a difficult situation.

The king realized that he had been tricked. He had to either give the old woman the golden apple or admit that she had lent him a pot full of gold.

Get your body ready to show that you are the king before you speak.

The king said, “Well done! You have won the contest and the apple is yours.”

The old woman returned home to her village with not only the gold-enapple but also a great story to tell.


Check Out The Newspaper

There is a saying that “honesty is the best policy.” Talk about what that means and decide if it is always true. Find stories in the newspaper about people who had trouble due to lying. Can you find any situations where someone should have lied?
Gao Mai's fingers flew back and forth over the smooth black beads of the abacus. Suddenly a wire snapped. The beads bounced onto the desk and rolled across the floor.

Gao Mai fell to her knees and crawled around after them. Just as she reached for the last bead, her best friend Li Zhi kicked it away from her hand. The other children giggled.

Gao Mai opened her eyes wide and sat up in alarm. What an awful dream! She pushed aside the heavy quilt, got up from the floor and put on her school uniform.

"Are you ready for the big day?" Gao Mai's mother asked her as she came into the main room of the apartment.

The dream was fresh in her mind. "I'm not sure," she said.

"Remember what I told you," said Gao Mai's father. "Imagine the abacus is part of you."

"But what about Li Zhi?" asked Gao Mai. "She's beaten me every year."

"Last time it was only by one second. You've improved so much, I'm sure you'll win."

Gao Mai looked at her watch. "I have to go."

Gao Mai ran downstairs to the street and walked quickly through the open market. She reached the school just as the bell rang.

In the classroom, Gao Mai watched Li Zhi's braids bounce as she tapped everyone on the way to her desk.

"Don't forget who won last year," said Li Zhi, sitting down behind her. She tugged on Gao Mai's ponytail and giggled.

"That was last year," Gao Mai leaned away and said, "if you pull my hair again, I'm not going to your house today."

Gao Mai's left hand moved down the column of numbers rapidly, wrote the answers and turned the test pages. The fingers on her right hand flew back and forth among the smooth, black beads of the abacus.

In a few minutes she was writing the last answer to the addition problems. Gao Mai began subtracting and a moment later heard pages turning. Everyone was right behind her!

She worked carefully. After finishing the last subtraction problem she heard Li Zhi's page turn. Barely breathing, Gao Mai sped through the multiplication and division. Finally she wrote down the last answer, jumped from her seat and collided with Li Zhi.

Two desks in front of them, Kun Pei rushed up and dropped his booklet on the teacher's desk.

"Oh, no!" yelled Li Zhi. "It's not fair!" She and Gao Mai dropped their booklets on the desk immediately after him.

"Quiet down, everyone," said the teacher.

Gao Mai returned to her desk and slumped in the seat, unaware of the other students handing in their booklets. Her bad dream had come true.

"Time for recess," said Mr. Wang, "while I check the answers."

After recess Mr. Wang stood up with the winning certificates in his hand. "Third-place winner of this year's abacus contest is Zong Zong."

"The second-place certificate goes to Kun Pei," Mr. Wang continued.

"Wow," began the teacher, "we have an unusual situation—ones that has never happened to me before."

First place in speed and accuracy goes to Li Zhi, last year's first-place winner, and also to Gao Mai, last year's second-place winner.

Gao Mai turned and looked at Li Zhi. They burst out laughing and hurried to the front of the room.

"Here's a first-place certificate for both of you," said Mr. Wang.

As Gao Mai shook hands with the teacher, she decided it was a good day to go to Li Zhi's, after all.


Check Out The Newspaper

This story is about a math contest. Why not stage a math contest of sorts in your classroom? Use the statistics from the Sports section of the newspaper to write word problems. Then divide your class into two teams. Each team takes turns giving the other team a word problem to solve. If they solve it, they get a point. If they miss it the other team gets the point.
Long before the time of the ancestors when Earth was young, the desert spirits met in the sacred land of Wiricuta. The desert land was an empty and lonely place so the spirits agreed upon creating the Huichols, the people at the center of the earth. The desert land was an empty and lonely place so the spirits agreed upon creating the Huichols, the people at the center of the earth.

The fifth child was born and brought by his parents to the Mara’kame. “Great Mara’kame, please find a name for our child.”

“I shall search for his name every night,” he responded.

When darkness came, the Mara’kame prayed to the spirits asking that a name for the child be revealed. On the third night a vision came into his dreams. While he held the child, the Mara’kame saw that they had arrived at the center of the earth. When he looked upward, he spotted the sacred eagle flying in a circle above them. As he raised the newborn, one of its feathers landed upon the child’s forehead. In the morning he called upon the people. “The sacred eagle will share its name with the fifth child,” he said.

The men and women became displeased at hearing his words, as none of their children had been given a name that belonged to the spirits. “You must find another name for this child,” they demanded.

The Mara’kame once again searched his dreams. But no other vision came to him. The child was destined to live without a name. However, as time passed he became known as Fast as Deer, for his legs were faster than any other boy’s. He also showed a courage and strength far above the others.

One day Mother Rain did not appear. The water springs dried out, and the cactus began to die. The people went to Mara’kame. “Great Mara’kame, ask Mother Rain to have mercy on us.”

“The desert spirits are greatly displeased with us,” he explained to the people. “You and your children must dance to the spirits and pray that they bring an end to the drought.”

Soon the young and old, the weak and strong chanted and prayed from dawn until dusk. But their humble voices were still not heard and everyone began to grow discouraged. After many days had passed, the Mara’kame said, “The spirits have abandoned us.”

That night Kupuri, the life force, slowly left the people’s weakened bodies. As all lay in their huts awaiting death, a vision came into the dreams of Fast as Deer. He saw that the sacred eagle flew in a circle above him. He felt the soft touch of a feather falling from the sky and landing upon his forehead. Then the sacred eagle spoke closely into his ear, “To end the drought, you must make four spears and cast each one into the four corners of earth.”

Fast as Deer carved four spears from the branches of a tree. He also attached eagle feathers to the end of each spear in honor of the sacred eagle. As the new day began he threw the first spear to the south. The spear cut through the wind, and as it fell to earth a fresh and cooling breeze began to blow over the desert floor.

Fast as Deer hurled the second spear to the north. After it landed on the ground the people were awakened by lightning and rumbling thunder. As they peeked through their doors, all saw him cast the third spear toward the east. When it fell back to earth the life-giving rain came. The people rejoiced as raindrops began pouring from the sky, ending the drought.

When the people came to thank him, they noticed that Fast as Deer held yet a fourth spear in his hand. He cast the fourth spear toward the west. The people held their breaths and stared at the beautiful arch of seven colors that appeared in the sky, spreading across the land from one end to the other.

“Let us go and chase after it!” a young man shouted.

“It could be a trap of evil doing,” an elder warned.

A great fear took over the men, women and children. Who would now go and find out what the strange and magical sight in the sky really was?

While everyone watched, Fast as Deer slowly stepped away toward the mysterious arch of seven colors. After the people had long lost sight of him, he finally arrived at its foot. He came closer and saw that each color formed a step into the sky. As he ascended, his arms slowly began to take the shape of the sacred eagle’s wings. His feet also curled into sharp claws.

When he reached the top, the magical ladder disappeared into the air. Fast as Deer then saw that he could roam with the flight of the sacred eagle. He flew in circles above the awaiting people and heard the wind bringing their cheering voices to his ears. “Fast as Deer is the one who saved us from dying! He is the chosen one, the one who shares the spirit of the sacred eagle!”

The magical arch still speaks of Fast as Deer as it spreads it glowing colors after each rain and across the sky of Wiricuta, the sacred land of the Huichols.

Kospi & the First Flowers

Tehuelche

In a time when there were no flowers in the world, there lived a beautiful girl named Kospi. Each morning, Kospi walked down to the lake and looked at its smooth, silvery surface. Kospi used the reflective water for a mirror by which to comb her long, straight black hair. When Kospi returned to the village, she joined the other women, both young and old, in daily work. Often, the women wove fiber mats, sewed or dyed blankets. On some days they gathered pigments to create paints of many hues.

Kospi was so alluring that young hunters came for great distances from the surrounding villages just to see her. It was said that, no matter how a young man felt when he arrived in Kospi’s village, one glance at her smile would make him happy.

One foggy morning, Kospi took her comb and set off down the trail to the lake. As she bent over to gaze into the water, there was a brilliant flash of light. For some time, the light blinded Kospi. As she waited for her sight to return, she began to shiver. It seemed as if the cold South Wind had arrived at the wrong time of year. When she could see again, Kospi found that she had been transported to a vast cave in the hollow of an enormous glacier. A pale, bluish white light surrounded her. Kospi had been kidnapped by Lightning, the powerful being who ruled the mountains.

“Help!” Kospi screamed. “Can anyone hear me? I have been brought to this terrible place against my will. Help!” Over and over Kospi called out as she searched for a way to escape from the cave, but no one could hear her. Her grief was so great that she lost hope. Kospi lay down on the glacial ice and melted into it, becoming part of the frozen water itself.

When Lightning no longer heard Kospi calling, he went looking for her. But, because she had wandered off and had become part of the ice, he could not find her. Lightning thundered and his deep boom echoed into the valleys. Even though his cries were in vain, Lightning’s voice stirred the rain into a frenzy. Torrents rushed down the valleys and melted the floes of ice. Kospi became part of the raging waters that flowed down the slopes toward the village. When, in time, the swollen streams and rivers ebbed within their banks, Kospi soaked into the earth on which her people walked each day.

The following spring, a soft, warm North Wind began to blow. Slowly, the melted water of Kospi rose into the roots and stems of the plants all around her village. Every plant that grew from her water formed a lovely flower on the top of its stem. Each flower was the face of Kospi. From those flowers, and from every bloom that has since graced the hillsides, Kospi has looked out upon her people. To this day, when the Tehuelche see flower petals blooming, they say, “Look at the face of the beautiful Kospi. She has come to visit us once again.”

From Earth Tales From Around the World
by Michael J. Caduto.
Illustrated by
Adelaide Murphy Tyrol.
Golden, Colorado:
The Coming of Fire
Aboriginal

Goorda, the fire spirit, lived alone among the stars of the Southern Cross. He was a great hunter who traveled between three different campfires, known as the Points. When he was lonely, Goorda wanted his neighbors to visit.

"Would you like to come to my camp?" he asked. "I will give you as much as you can eat, and we can share songs and stories."

Goorda prepared his camp. He watched and hoped that the visitors would come, but no one arrived. Down below, on Earth, Goorda saw that people lived together. They helped each other hunt and gather roots and nuts. Children swam and played games with their friends. Adults told stories when they gathered in the evening. "Come," Goorda called down to Earth, "there is much game where I live. You may hunt here." But Earth's people did not come.

One night, Goorda saw the Earth people eating raw meat from the kangaroo and the goanna lizard. He watched them sit close together in order to keep warm as they ate. "Fire, that is what the Earth people do not have," he said to himself. "But fire is something I have enough of for everyone. I will bring it to the Earth people."

"Please take me with you!" Goorda cried to one of the falling stars as it streaked toward Earth. But it did not stop. After he banked his fires so they would not go out, Goorda followed the path of the falling star and shot toward Earth in a bright flash. He headed for the shore opposite where a group of people were gathered along the banks of the Gainmaui River by Caledon Bay.

"I come bearing a gift for you," said Goorda. When his feet touched ground, however, the brush began to crackle with flames. Soon, a blaze was roaring along the riverbank. Across the river, the people picked up their spears and watched, their faces kissed by the red hues of the dancing flames. When the heat from the fire became so great they could feel its pain, they screamed and fled from Goorda.

"Stay! Do not go!" Goorda cried, "I will not hurt you." But flames spread everywhere he walked. Those people who jumped into their canoes and paddled away from shore survived. A goanna lizard burrowed into the ground and closed its doorway with soil. It, too, escaped the smoke and flames. Nearby, the spider, Garwuli, survived by taking refuge in the deep fissure of a broken rock. A cloud of honeybees rose into the air and fled to the shelter of a hollow tree a great distance away. The swallows circled overhead and caught insects that fled upward from the flames. Crocodiles, barramundi fish and other water creatures swam away from the hot, steaming waters along the riverbank. All of these escaped Goorda's fire.

But Goorda, not understanding, tried to get close to people so he could visit with them. Some people were burned in their huts. Others fled in terror. By the end of the day, Goorda looked out over a silent, black, smoldering land. Overhead, a red-winged parrot called and circled in search of a place to land, then flew away searching for safety until it sank down below the horizon in the distance.

Exhausted, Goorda sat down to rest. He found a kangaroo that had been burned and began to eat. "This will not do," he said. "I will have to appear to the Earth people in a different way, or they will always flee from me." Goorda changed to the form of a person and painted a diamond on his breast. "This will be my symbol," he said. "Now I am ready to greet people and teach them how to use fire in a good way."
How the Dogs Became Companions to the People

Long ago, in the time before there were any human beings, Gluskabe, The One Who Does Much Talking, the one who helps our Creator, that one was out walking around.

"Soon," Gluskabe said, "it will be time to make the human beings. I wonder how the animal people will treat them?"

So Gluskabe decided to call the animal people together to ask them how they would treat these new ones who were about to be created. He went into a clearing in the forest and called them. So from the littlest mouse to the giant bear, the Animal People gathered around Gluskabe.

"Kita, nidoobak. Listen, all my friends. Soon new ones are going to be created and I want to know how you will treat them. I want each of you to come close. Then I will whisper the name of the new ones who are going to be created and you can tell me what you will do."

Great Bear was the first to come forward. He was very proud of himself because he was the biggest of the animals. His teeth were as long as a human's arm and each of his feet were as big as a wigwam! Gluskabe whispered the word for human being into his ear: "Alnobak."

Great Bear reared up on his hind legs and roared. He swung his paws in the air. "I will tear them apart!" he growled. "I will swallow them whole."

Gluskabe put out his hand and picked up Great Bear. "Nda," Gluskabe said. "You are too fierce." Then Gluskabe gently stroked Great Bear with his right hand. Great Bear became smaller and smaller until he was not much larger than bears are today.

"Now you will not be such a danger to the human beings," Gluskabe said. He put Great Bear down. "Run away into the forest."

Now Great Moose came forward. In those ancient days, Moose was taller than the tree tops with sharp horns bigger than the branches of the giant pine. "Alnobak," Gluskabe whispered into the ear of Great Moose.

Great Moose stomped his feet. "I will throw them up into the air with my horns," he bellowed. "I will trample them under my hooves."

Gluskabe reached out his hand and picked up Great Moose. "Nda," Gluskabe said. "That will not do."

Then Gluskabe pushed on the nose of Great Moose with his right hand. As he did so, Great Moose grew smaller and his nose was pushed in—just as it is today. Gluskabe pressed down on the horns of Great Moose and they flattened out and were no longer so sharp and dangerous. "Now you will not be such a danger to the human beings," Gluskabe said. "Run away into the forest."

The next to come forward was Great Squirrel. In those ancient days, Great Squirrel was the fiercest of all the Animal People. Great Squirrel was almost as large as Great Bear and was very strong. "Alnobak," Gluskabe whispered.

Great Squirrel jumped up and down and tore huge branches off the trees, throwing them down onto the ground. "I will chew them up," Great Squirrel shouted in a terrible voice. "I will throw trees down on top of them and crush them."

Again Gluskabe reached out his hand. He picked up Great Squirrel and began to stroke him. But because Great Squirrel was so very angry and fierce, he stroked him longer than Great Bear or Great Moose. When he finished, Great Squirrel was smaller than the rabbit. "You are too fierce," Gluskabe said. "It would not be safe for you to remain as a big animal. Now run away into the forest."

Squirrel ran away and climbed up into the tree tops. Although Squirrel was now very small, he was still angry and fierce. To this day, sometimes when you walk under a tree Squirrel will shout at you and throw down branches.

But because Squirrel is small, Squirrel's voice is small, too, and the branches Squirrel throws are no bigger than little twigs.

Now the Wolf came to Gluskabe. Wolf looked very much as wolves do to this day. "Alnobak," Gluskabe whispered.

"If they walk their way," Wolf said, "I will walk mine."

"That is good," Gluskabe said.

Other animals came up, one by one. When Gluskabe whispered the name of the human beings to them, to the deer; the caribou and the elk, they all gave the same answer: "We will stay away from them. If they come to hunt us, we will run away."

"That is good," Gluskabe said.

At last, Gluskabe thought he had spoken to all of the animals which had gathered. A few animals, some of the ancient fierce ones, had not come when Gluskabe called. That made Gluskabe sad, for he knew that it meant they would hunt the human beings. Some day, all of those fierce ancient ones would have to be destroyed.

Gluskabe looked up and saw one more animal sitting, patiently, at the edge of the clearing. It came trotting up and sat at Gluskabe's feet. It was Dog.

"Master," Dog said, "I know about the ones who are coming. I have been waiting for them."

"What will you do when they arrive?" Gluskabe said.

"Master," Dog said, "I want to live with them. I want to sleep by their fires and share their food. I want to take care of their children. I will help them when they go hunting. If there is danger, I will warn them and I will risk my own life to save them. I will be their greatest friend."

Gluskabe could see that every word which Dog spoke was true.

"My friend, it will be as you wish. You will go and live with the human beings. Even though some of them will not deserve to have such a great friend, you will be loyal to them and sleep by their fire. That is how it will be."

And that is how it is to this day.


Check Out The Newspaper

Read some of the pet for sale or adoption ads in the newspaper's Classified section. Choose one you like and draw a picture of the pet described. Write a letter to the animal telling why you would make a good owner.
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