

Creations

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Inventory

Get To Know You

Please Respond to the following. Answers do not have to be in the form of complete sentences.

Name (first and last):

Nickname (if you have one):

Favorite color:

Hobbies:

Extracurricular school activities (clubs, teams, band, etc.):

Favorite book:

Favorite author:

Favorite movie:

Favorite band or musical artist:

Favorite song:

Favorite type of food:

Favorite television show:

Strongest academic subject:

Weakest academic subject:

Future goals and aspirations:

What book, poem or play, would you most like to read during this course?

What are your expectations for this course?

Rationale

Creation stories differ worldwide, but exist everywhere. In Jan Harold Brunvard's *The Study of American Folklore*, creation myths are defined as "prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past" (99). In this unit, we plan to survey a wide variety of the creation stories that exist in various cultures from different parts of the globe. The focus of this particular unit is twofold. On one hand, we would like to heighten our students' social awareness regarding cultures that differ greatly from the ones of which the students are a part. We also hope to assist students in finding the cultural significance of the various cultures we are studying.

Since we are living in a multicultural nation, our mentality as a country and world is becoming a global one that is defined by a respect for and celebration in different cultures, including their accompanying religions, customs, and languages. By teaching the unit, *Creations*, we would be exposing students to many different concepts of our world's beginning without placing bias on any one idea. It is critical that students of different cultural backgrounds become educated in regard to the customs and beliefs that are part of cultures other than their own, so that they will grow up to be socially aware, culturally respectful citizens. It is just this type of education that reduces

the risk of our nation falling back into racism and classism that made necessary the civil rights movement earlier this century, as well as the many other ethnocentric practices in our world's history, including the Crusades, colonization of the Americas, the Nazi Regime, and the slave trade.

Creation stories contain both striking similarities and exaggerated differences. Noting these similarities and deciphering the differences is quite educational. We are not aiming to discredit any culture's beliefs, but to reveal how their culture's beliefs affect their society and vice versa. Indeed, according to Raffaele Pettazoni who wrote "Myths of Beginning and Creation Myths" in *Essays on the History of Religions*, "The creation myth expresses in symbolic manner what is most essential to human life and society by relating it to a primordial act of foundation recorded in myth" (31). For example, the emergence accounts of several North American Indian tribes begin with the "Earth-mother," who provides the people of the world with a place to walk, till, live, and eventually die. In contrast, in the Biblical story, the head of the world is male and first creates a male, then later decides woman would be a nice addition. The distinctions between the two stories reveal much about the cultures that evoked them.

Since the word "myth" was used so frequently in the last paragraph, now seems an appropriate time to broach the subject of using this term within the unit. Before researching any works, we agreed that the connotation of the

word "myth" denotes disbelief. Charles H. Long, writer of *Alpha: Myths of Creation*, agreed with our sentiment by saying, "Because of the widespread popularity of evolutionist and rationalist thinking our culture, the term "myth" usually refers to the fanciful imagination of the human mind. As such it is the opposite of the world of reality. In a similar vein, one can see that those peoples and cultures who live in terms of an explicit myth have been treated politically by the West as they were not real, e.g., the American Indians, Africans, Indians, etc. Certain contemporary theologians in the West abhor the use of myth precisely because they think that it refers to the fanciful and unreal, and therefore is not a proper vehicle for the profound and serious 'Word of God' " (11). For this reason, we have decided to avoid the use of the word "myth" completely in our unit as to avoid the feelings of humorous disbelief that might discredit stories in which students already believe or stories with which students are not acquainted. Though we could attempt to teach the students that myth does not mean "unbelievable tale," it would be difficult to impossible to untangle this already ingrained concept and doing so might take away from our overall goal, to increase cultural awareness, not cultural defensiveness.

One way that we intend on "cleansing the palate" of students' pre-existing notions about creation stories is to teach the best-selling book *Ishmael*. We will only be reading the first ninety-one pages of the book, because this

portion of the text deal more specifically with creation than does the rest of the book. This book is written in a clear, concise and simple manner that we believe students would be able to read quickly and enjoy. Also, through the elaborate story of Ishmael, the talking gorilla, the author breaks down many assumptions about creation stories, including Darwin's evolution, of which readers, including myself, were previously unaware. By reading *Ishmael* we hope that students will begin take an in depth look at their own beliefs and the basis for these beliefs. Hopefully, this will lead them to better understand how other people arrive at theirs instead of viewing them as "prescientific attempts to give an explanation of the world" (Long 15), as the Greek myths have been commonly portrayed in schools.

By reading origin stories from all across the world, we will bring in a tremendous multicultural element that does not focus on one segment of society. The fact that similarities can be drawn between the creation stories will allow the students to make connections between different cultures, as well as acknowledge the differences that exist among these stories. As students notice these similarities and differences, they should become more aware of similarities and differences existing among various cultures today. By educating students multiculturally, a deep respect for other cultures should root itself within the minds of students. These students, future travelers, will represent our nation positively by displaying a respectful

attitude toward people of other cultures when visiting distant lands, and even when they are in their own neighborhood.

Works Cited

Brunvand, Jan. *The Study of American Folklore*. 1978. W.W. Norton & Company. New York, New York.

Long, Charles H. *Alpha: Myths of Creation*. 1963. George Braziller, Inc. New York, New York.

Pettazzoni, Raffaele. "Myths of Beginning and Creations

Myths" in *Essays*

on the History of Religions. 1954. E.J. Brill.
Leiden.

Goals and Rubrics

I. Create a story explaining the beginning of some part of nature or society or an artful breeding of both.

It could include, but not necessarily be limited to, natural phenomenon such as the sun rising, the creation of physical parts of our world, a certain phrase or word that is used, or a ritual that is carried out. Please be creative. Using a societal/historical explanation that already exists is not acceptable. This project will be graded on An "A-B-F" basis, which means it is basically pass/fail, 'B' being passing, 'F' being failing, and 'A' being an outstanding example that uses the criteria listed below. You are encouraged to construct the details of the society that surrounds the story that you are creating, whether it is familiar or created for the story.

"A" Project (90-100 points):

- *is turned in on time
- * is original, creative, and well-detailed in explanation using descriptive speech and sensory details.

"B" Project (80-90 points):

- *is turned in on time
- *is not well developed, lacking significant details and descriptive language

"F" Project (0-59 points):

*is not turned in on time

*is not original, or is plagiarized

II. Cultural Research Journal Folder -

Students will keep a folder (three-ring binder with side pockets) in which they will keep journal responses, which will consist of short, free form writings based upon broad questions relating to the text assigned for homework. Also included in this folder will be weekly reflections upon research conducted in the computer lab, as well as actual findings (printed, hand-written, or printed e-mails).

Students will be required to keep handouts and photocopied explanations as well. This should also help the students to develop organizational skills. This folder will be taken up and graded as an illustration of the students' progress throughout the unit. It will show that the students have completed assigned readings and research, give students a point of reference when putting together their final projects, and give them a place to make connections between the two.

"A" (45-50) points:

Students respond to each journal assignment.

When responding to assigned readings, students convey the notion that they have indeed read the material.

When reporting research findings, students list findings

that are of interest to them, and which they feel might be pertinent to their final research.

"B" (40-45) points:

Students respond to all but two journal assignments, research findings, or a combination of the two.

When responding to assigned readings, students convey some notion that they have read the material, but some entries are a bit unclear.

"C" (35-40) points:

Students respond to all but three or four journal assignments, research findings, or a combination of the two.

When responding to assigned readings, students are vague on details.

"D" (30-35) points:

Students respond to all but five or six journal assignments, research findings, or a combination of the two.

When responding to assigned readings, students give very few details, if any.

"F" (0-29) points:

Students do not respond to seven or more journal assignments, research findings, or a combination of the two.

No evidence is given that students have read assigned readings.

III. Creations Mural

This assignment will be a creative activity to help bring closure to the creations unit. Students will work with

colored pencils, magic markers and any other art supplies they choose to bring in to create a mural depicting various characters, gods, animals and elements from the stories we have studied. students are encouraged to use their imaginations when creating the mural. Students will work on butcher paper to construct a mural, which will decorate the classroom or wall directly outside of the classroom for weeks following the completion of the unit. Students are expected to contribute, regardless of their various levels of perceived artistic talent. This activity should be considered "fun" by the students. Grading will be presented on a pass/fail basis.

"A" 15 points

Students participate in the above activity

"F" 0 points

Students fail to participate in the activity

IV. Create a project either alone, or in groups of four or fewer, that brings awareness of the class to one particular culture, their creation explanations, and how these two are interwoven (i.e. how one has influenced the other throughout the passing generations).

Be bold and interesting with this project. You must research thoroughly and display for the class the sights and sounds of your chosen culture to the best of your ability. This may include drawings, copied photographs, videos, oral traditions (genuine or reenacted), or any other method that is appropriate for class.

"A" Project (90-100 points):

* Is turned in on time

- *Demonstrates thorough research of the culture
- *Presentation is polished, showing preparedness, high respect for the culture researched, and clear interest in topic
- *Visual, audio, oral, and/or performance aspects are presented in a polished manner

"B" Project (80-90 points):

- * Is turned in ve language

"F" Project (0-59 points):

- *is not turned in on time
- *is not original, or is plagiarized

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"A" (45-50) points:

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When reporting research findings, students list findings that are of interest to them, and which they feel might be pertinent to their final research.

"B" (40-45) points:

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Be bold and interesting with this project. You must research thoroughly and display for the class the sights and sounds of your chosen culture to the best of your *ability*. This may include drawings, copied **photographs, videos**, oral traditions (genuine or reenacted), or any other method that is appropriate for class.

"A" Project (90-100 points):

* Is turned in on time

*Demonstrates thorough research of the culture world come into existence? How did you arrive at your explanation? This "in class" assignment will be worth five points and will be taken up at the end of the class period. Students who complete the assignment will be automatically awarded the complete five points. Students will be given ten minutes to answer the questions in an informal, conversational manner, interpreting the questions in any way they see fit.

After the ten-minute activity, we will ask them to break up into groups of four and discuss their answers. One person will be in charge of recording the common themes that arise during the discussion, noting the number of people within the group who share similar opinions. This discussion will last twenty minutes, or less if the discussion tapers. If the discussion does taper, we will begin the

following activity.

After the discussion, the recorders will report their findings to the class in a brief synopsis. We will record common strands on the board and the respective number of students who share each of these beliefs, tallying the totals as we move through the results. The purpose of writing the answers on the board is to arrive at the ratio of the class's opinions without taking a vote. This activity will also allow the members of the class to view the range of beliefs that exist among their peers in regard to the questions asked at the beginning of the period. This activity will consume the first day of our unit.

13 min: Students will meet in groups.

22 min: Group leaders will report to the entire class, record common themes on the board, and a class discussion will occur if time permits.

5 min: Hand out copies of *Ishmael*, by Daniel Quinn, and assign first two chapters (p. 3-29). Students will also be asked to fill out "Get To Know You" sheet. Dismiss the students.

Day Two:

5 min: Take attendance, create order, and take up "Get To Know You" sheet.

10 min: Explain to class what the research folder will count and how it will be counted.

7 min: Students write in journal regarding first assigned

reading of *Ishmael* in response to the following questions:

1. According to the text, what is a culture? 2. What is your definition of a culture?

20 min: Student volunteers will read aloud beginning with page 30.

13 min: Discuss students' journal responses. If discussion does not last the entire thirteen minutes, students can begin their homework reading.

Assignment written on board for homework: Read from where we left off in class to page 75.

Day Three:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Students will write their journal responses to the creation story in *Ishmael* (pgs. 54-56) that culminates with the creation of the jellyfish. They are to write their perceptions of and reactions to this creation explanation.

15 min: Students will break into small groups of four or five students. Discuss the questions: What is a taker culture? What is a leaver culture? One leader reports conclusions to class.

20 min: Report answers and have a student write the answers on the board. The class will then discuss the various answers. If the discussion dwindles the class will begin reading silently from *Ishmael* as a head start on what is the assigned homework reading pgs. 76-91.

8 min: Students read silently for the remainder of class.

Dismiss the students.

Homework assignment written on board: Read pages 76-91.

Day Four:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Students respond freely to the final reading of Ishmael.

10 min: Introduction of World-Parent Creation explanations.

3 min: Pass out copies of Egyptian World-Parents: Seb and Nut (Long 99-101) and the Zuni explanation: The Genesis of the Men and Creatures (Long 103-04).

10 min: Student volunteers will read the stories aloud in class.

17 min: The class as a whole will discuss the similarities and differences between the two explanations. If the discussion tapers, pass out copies of the Minyong creation explanation (Long 106-09). If time permits, students can begin reading the story in class. The Minyong reading will be assigned for homework.

3 min: Pass out copies of Minyong creation story (if we haven't already done so). Dismiss the class.

Day Five:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Students will write in journals in response to the homework assignment concerning the Minyong creation story noting similarities and differences to two World-Parent

explanations we read the previous day.

10 min: Pass out and introduce the importance of the Critical Eye Worksheet, which is designed to make connections and note the differences of the cultures studied in a particular group of Creation Explanations (i.e. World-Parent explanations). Students will keep copies of this sheet as well as the connections/differences they make with the stories in their journals.

13 min: Students meet in groups of four to answer questions on the Critical Eye Worksheet.

20 min: Student groups report connections and differences to the class as a whole. A student volunteer will write the information on the board. Dismiss the students.

Homework written on board: Read pages 151-184.

Week Two

Day Six:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7min: Accompany students to the computer lab or media center

8 min: Explain the research activity. Research will be over one of the three cultures studied thus far. Students will use the Internet to conduct their own cultural research, which should be used toward their final project. The purpose of this research is to allow students to familiarize themselves with the cultures discussed. They will be responsible for taking detailed notes, e-mailing themselves

(to be printed later), or printing out the information they discover for their research folders.

30 min: Students conduct research.

5 min: Return to class and dismiss the students.

Day Seven:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Students write journal entry regarding students' individual findings from the previous day in the computer lab or media center.

15 min: Students will break into groups of no more than four based upon culture studied in the computer lab.

Students should discuss their findings and arrange them so that they can be presented to the class. One student will record the groups' findings, and another student will report the findings to the class.

28 min: Group reporters relay findings to class. Students are advised to take notes regarding cultures of interest for their later project. Dismiss the students.

Day Eight:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

5 min: Introduce Creation from Nothing explanations.

3 min: Hand out copies of the Australian Story of the Great Father (Long 162-65).

10 min: Students volunteers read the story aloud in class.

20 min: The class as a whole will participate in a

discussion based upon the Critical Eye worksheet regarding the roles of animals, humans, gods and elements in the various stories. Students will discuss how the Australian myth is similar to the stories we have studied thus far, as well as how it differs. If the discussion remains productive, it will extend until the end of the class period.

12 min: (backup plan) However, if the discussion tapers, we will hand out copies of the Theogeny of Hesiod (Long pgs. 166-69). Students will be allowed to read silently until the end of class. But if discussion remains productive, copies will be handed out during the final five minutes of class and assigned for homework. Dismiss the students.

Day Nine:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Students write in journals regarding the Theogeny of Hesiod. This will be a free-writing activity.

5 min: Pass out copies of the Ancient Maya Creation Explanation from the Popul Vuh (Long pgs. 170-72), as well as the Hebrew Creation Explanation (Long pgs. 184-87).

15 min: Students will read silently both the Maya and Hebrew explanations.

23 min: Discuss similarities and differences of elements contained within the two texts that the students read silently. Dismiss students.

Day Ten:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Accompany students to computer lab or media center.

Students may research any of the cultures we have studied thus far. Students will be reminded to begin focusing on a specific culture that they would like to study for their final representation.

38 min: Students research either the same culture from last week or a different one we have studied that interests them.

5 min: Walk back to class and dismiss the students.

Week Three

Day Eleven:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Students will write in journal regarding the research they conducted in the lab or media center on Day Ten.

20 min: Students will break into groups of no more than four, according to their culture of interest, and discuss findings.

10 min: Introduce the creative writing assignment in which students will write their own creation explanation. We will pass out the rubric for grading the assignment and the due date.

13 min: Allow students to brainstorm in preparation for the assignment. Dismiss students at the end of class.

Day Twelve:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

30 min: Allow students to work on their personal creation explanations.

20 minutes: The whole class will conduct a discussion based upon Critical Eye worksheet comparing and contrasting elements contained within the Creation from Nothing explanations. The discussion will take same the form as on Day Eight when we initiated the Critical Eye discussion. Dismiss students at the end of class.

Day Thirteen:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

10 min: Introduce the Earth-Diver Explanation stories.

3 min: Pass out copies of The Huron explanation for the Making of the World (Long 193-97).

12 min: Students volunteers will take turns reading the story aloud in class.

25 min: Students will watch "The Spoken Word," a video recording of stories told by the different Indian tribes of the Southwest. Though the Huron are not represented in this documentary, we want to show the video after we have studied the North American Indian tribes selected for this unit.

Day Fourteen:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

3 min: Hand out copies of the Central Asiatic creation story (Long 205-06) as well as The creation of the World, the Origin of the Negritos (Long 210-11).

8 min: Students will take turns reading aloud in class.

15 min: Students will break into groups of four to discuss similarities and differences of the two stories. One student in each group will record the similarities of the group discussion, and another will report back to the class.

20 min: Group reporters relay findings to class. If any time is remaining, students may work on their creation stories.

4 min: Remind class that creation stories assignment is due. Dismiss the students.

Day Fifteen:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

5 min: Gather the student creation stories.

7 min: Accompany students to computer lab or media center and get situated.

33 min: Students will continue to collect research with a major emphasis placed upon the final project.

5 min: Students return to class. Dismiss the students.

Week Four

Day Sixteen:

7 min: Take attendance, create order, and return graded creation stories.

30-50 min: Student volunteers summarize their explanations for extra credit of ten points on the assignment. If students' summaries do not last the entire class time, then we will spend the remainder of class discussing final project.

Day Seventeen:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Students will write their final journal entry regarding their research conducted on Day Fifteen.

20 min: Discuss final assignment if necessary

23-38 min: Allow student groups to meet in class concerning library research. Dismiss the class.

Day Eighteen:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Accompany students to media center or computer lab.

38 min: Students may do further research or meet in groups to discuss or prepare final project.

5 min: Walk back to class and dismiss the students.

Day Nineteen:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

50 min: This will be the final day for students to prepare in class for final projects.

Day Twenty:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

7 min: Explain mural representation and pass out butcher paper.

33 min: Students will create the mural.

10 min: Students will clean up any mess that is made during the mural activity. Dismiss the students at the end of class.

Week Five

Day Twenty-one:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

20 min: Students will finish the mural activity and clean up. If the mural activity is already completed, then begin student presentations of final projects.

30 min: Students will present their final projects. Dismiss the students at the end of class.

Day Twenty-two:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

50 min: Students will continue presentations of final projects.

Day Twenty-three:

5 min: Take attendance and create order.

50 min: Allow remaining students to finish final presentations if necessary. End of unit.