

Artsource

*The Music Center's Study Guide
to the Performing Arts*

TRADITIONAL

CLASSICAL

CONTEMPORARY

EXPERIMENTAL

MULTI-MEDIA

ARTISTIC PERCEPTION (AP)

CREATIVE EXPRESSION (CE)

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT (H/C)

AESTHETIC VALUING (AV)

CONNECT, RELATE & APPLY (CRA)

TRANSFORMATION

ENDURING
VALUESFREEDOM &
OPPRESSIONTHE POWER
OF NATURETHE HUMAN
FAMILY

Title of Work:

Songs and Stories of My People

Creator:

Storyteller: Geri Keams b.1951

Background Information:

Geri Keams was born and raised on the Navajo Nation in the Painted Desert region of Arizona. Her grandmother, a well-known Navajo rug weaver, taught her the importance of passing on the stories of the 'Old Ones.' Geri has shared these stories in schools and museums all over the United States. She graduated from the University of Arizona with a degree in drama and continued her studies at Cafe La Mama in New York City. Geri is also an accomplished actress, best known for her role in the classic western, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, with Clint Eastwood. A published poet, her work can be found in the anthologies: *The Remembered Earth*, *A Gathering of Spirit*, and *When Clouds Threw This Light*. Geri is one of five Native American storytellers featured in an audio cassette and book series by Harper and Row and Parabola documenting authentic Indian myths and legends.

About The Artwork:

Geri Keams dramatically brings traditional Native American myths and legends to life on stage. Her stories come from many tribes and include: Trickster Coyote Tales, Creation Stories, Spiderwoman Stories, Serpent Tales, and Animal Legends. *The Quillwork Girl*, featured on an audio recording with this unit, tells the tale of a young girl with an extraordinary talent for embroidering porcupine quills on buckskin. Her dreams reveal the presence of seven brothers whom she travels to

meet, and the legend of their life together explains the creation of the Big Dipper. Geri also sings ceremonial chants, such as *The Beauty Way*, *Four Directions Chant*, *Sunrise Chant*, and *Navajo Gift Songs*. Her unique story telling performance communicates the experiences of Native American tradition and culture in ways that are educational, entertaining and memorable.

Creative Process of the Artist or Culture:

Geri's stories come from one of two sources: ones she has heard, passed down orally by relatives and friends, or stories she has found in anthologies of Native American tales and legends. Whatever the source, each story in her repertoire must move her in a deep sense; she must feel a strong connection to the material. After Geri has heard or read a story, she then puts it into her own words. Next she transcribes her version of the story and uses that as a kind of 'script.' As she practices



Photo by Chris Emerick, courtesy of Segrestrom Center for the Arts

"I am a weaver of words. Storytelling gives me the opportunity to intertwine the tradition of orally handed down stories of the Native American cultures with the contemporary experiences of my life and lives which continue to survive in the present age."

Geri Keams

telling the story, she strives to find its true voice and its natural rhythm. No two tellings are exactly the same, for the art of the storyteller is, in part, the ability to embellish stories as one makes them his or her own.



Discussion Questions:

After listening to the audio recording:

- What story do you remember most vividly?
- What were the settings for the stories?
- Did you notice anything unique about the language of the stories?
- What characters or symbols appeared in the stories?
- What came to mind as you listened to the Navajo ceremonial chants?
- Did this singing sound like any other vocalizing you have heard before?
- Were there events in the myths and legends that seemed fantastic or larger than life?
- Did animal characters take on human personalities or have special powers?
- If you could choose three adjectives to describe *The Quillwork Girl*, what would they be?
- What were your impressions of the Buffalo Nation as characterized in the story?
- Who was the hero in *The Quillwork Girl*?
- *The Quillwork Girl* tells about the creation of the Big Dipper. Do you know any other myths or legends about the constellations?
- Did any of the stories remind you of stories from your own culture? Give examples.

Multidisciplinary Options:

- Native Americans used a type of sign or notation called pictographs which were painted on tree bark or animal skins. Find examples to use for mural-making, telling a simple story with selected symbols or images.
- Many tribes wear headdresses and elaborate costume pieces in their rituals and ceremonies. Create masks and/or costumes patterned after those used by, for example, the Zuni or Eskimo peoples. Incorporate them into a story theatre presentation. Refer to the *Artsource*® Unit, *May Day Parade*, Sample Lesson I.
- Research and study the scientific theories about the migration of America's first immigrants. How do scientists envision the geography of the world's land mass at that time? How does it compare to the map or globe as we know it today?

Audio-Visual Materials:

- *Artsource*® video and audio track: *The Quillwork Girl*, courtesy of Geri Keams and Let's Tell Stories.
- *Artsource*® video: *Storytellers: Geri Keams*, courtesy of Geri Keams and The Girl Scouts of the USA.

Additional References:

- Dutton, Bertha and Olin, Caroline. *Myths & Legends of the Indians of the Southwest*. Bellerophon Books, Santa Barbara, CA: 1988.
- Erdoes, Richard and Ortiz, Alfonso. *American Indian Myths and Legends*. Pantheon Books, New York, NY: 1984.

Sample Experiences:

LEVEL I

- Tell one thing that happened in a myth or legend from the program.
- Draw a picture of one of the characters you liked.
- Visit your school library to find a book of Native American stories and read one.
- * • Make a sand painting based on a traditional design.
- Select several images from the American Indian symbols on page 6. Create a story about them.

LEVEL II

- * • Dramatize an Indian legend. Have one person act as a narrator and have others pantomime the action.
- Research the geographical locations of various Indian homelands. Mark the areas with flags on a map of the United States.
- Read a collection of *Trickster Tales* about Hare, Coyote or Raven.

LEVEL III

- Create a myth (such as, "why the moon has phases") explaining a mystery or phenomenon and transcribe it.
- * • Compose song-poems based on Navajo ceremonial chants.
- Become a storyteller, and relate a Native American legend or myth in your own words.



Quillwork on buckskin bag
Ojibway

SAND PAINTING TRANSFORMATION

LEVEL I Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

Sand painting is used by Navajo medicine men to drive away evil spirits. It is part of a “sing” which is the Navajo name for a great number of rituals. The medicine man, who is also an artist, chants while sifting different colors of sand through his fingers. At the end of the ceremony, a sick person is carefully laid on the sand painting to be near his gods. The medicine man dips his fingers first into a liquid and then into the sand painting, transferring some of the sand to the patient's skin, bringing him in tune with its symbolic meaning and giving him some of its power. Sand paintings are sacred. It is believed that they must be destroyed by sunset of the day they are begun. After the ceremony, the sand is thrown in four directions to confuse the evil spirits. There are more than 500 traditional sand painting designs and chants.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Make a traditional sand painting using the images provided, or ones from their research. (Historical and Cultural Context)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (Aesthetic Valuing)

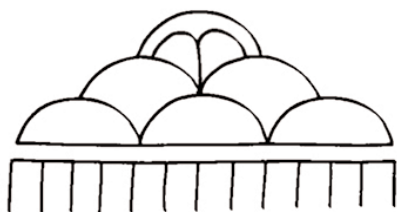
MATERIALS:

- Fine sand or salt of various colors (see recipe); jars or bowls for mixing and stirring the sand; heavy cardboard or sandpaper; paper cone or spoon; varnish, shellac, glue or paste; watercolor paint; carbon paper (to transfer design); brushes or Q-tips for gluing; toothpicks; tempera and paint brushes.

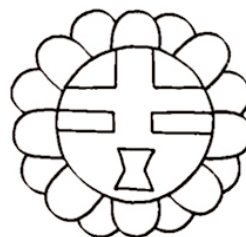
RECIPE for colored sand and colored salt:

Place sand (use white sand for best results) or salt on a piece of wrapping paper or several thicknesses of newspaper. Combine with powdered chalk or tempera until a color of sufficient depth is obtained.

Traditional Sand Painting Images



Hopi Design symbolizing clouds and rain.



The Sun Symbol

PROGRESSION:

- Sketch or trace a design on the cardboard sheet.
- Use tempera paint to brush in the background colors where sand is not desired.
- Choose the area to be done in a particular color sand and paint a thin coat of shellac, varnish, glue or paste on these parts (paint a small area at a time).
- Trickle or sprinkle the colored sand from a paper cone or spoon onto the areas that have been covered with paste, varnish or white shellac.
- Allow the work to dry for a few minutes, then lift the work and tap it lightly so excess sand is removed.
- Repeat this process for all additional colors until the picture is completed.

Note: Native Americans poured sand from the hand along the second joint of the index finger. The thumb was used to stop the flow of sand.

EXTENSIONS:

- Create an original symbol which embodies an aspect of nature or life to use as a sand painting pattern.
- Study the role of the medicine man in Native American tribes and find his counterpart in other ethnic groups and cultures.

VOCABULARY: sand painting, “sing,” ritual, symbol

ASSESSMENT: (Aesthetic Valuing)

DESCRIBE: Describe the design you made and what it symbolizes.

DISCUSS: Discuss how doing a sand painting is different than creating a painting with paint.

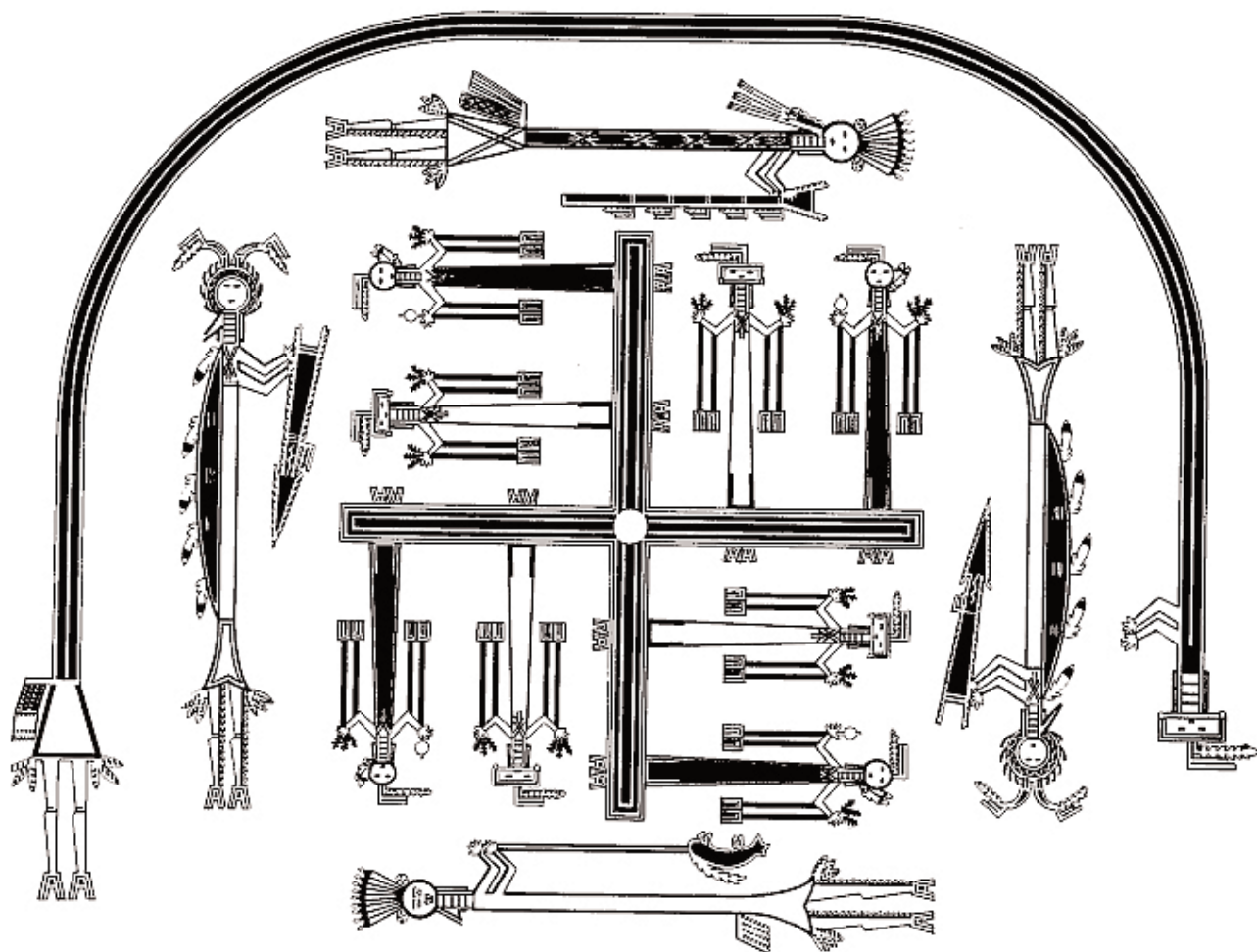
ANALYZE: Discuss the traditional reasons for making sand paintings and how this is different from making a sand painting for enjoyment.

CONNECT: Discuss some of things that people do in your culture to help sick people get well.



Gerri Keams

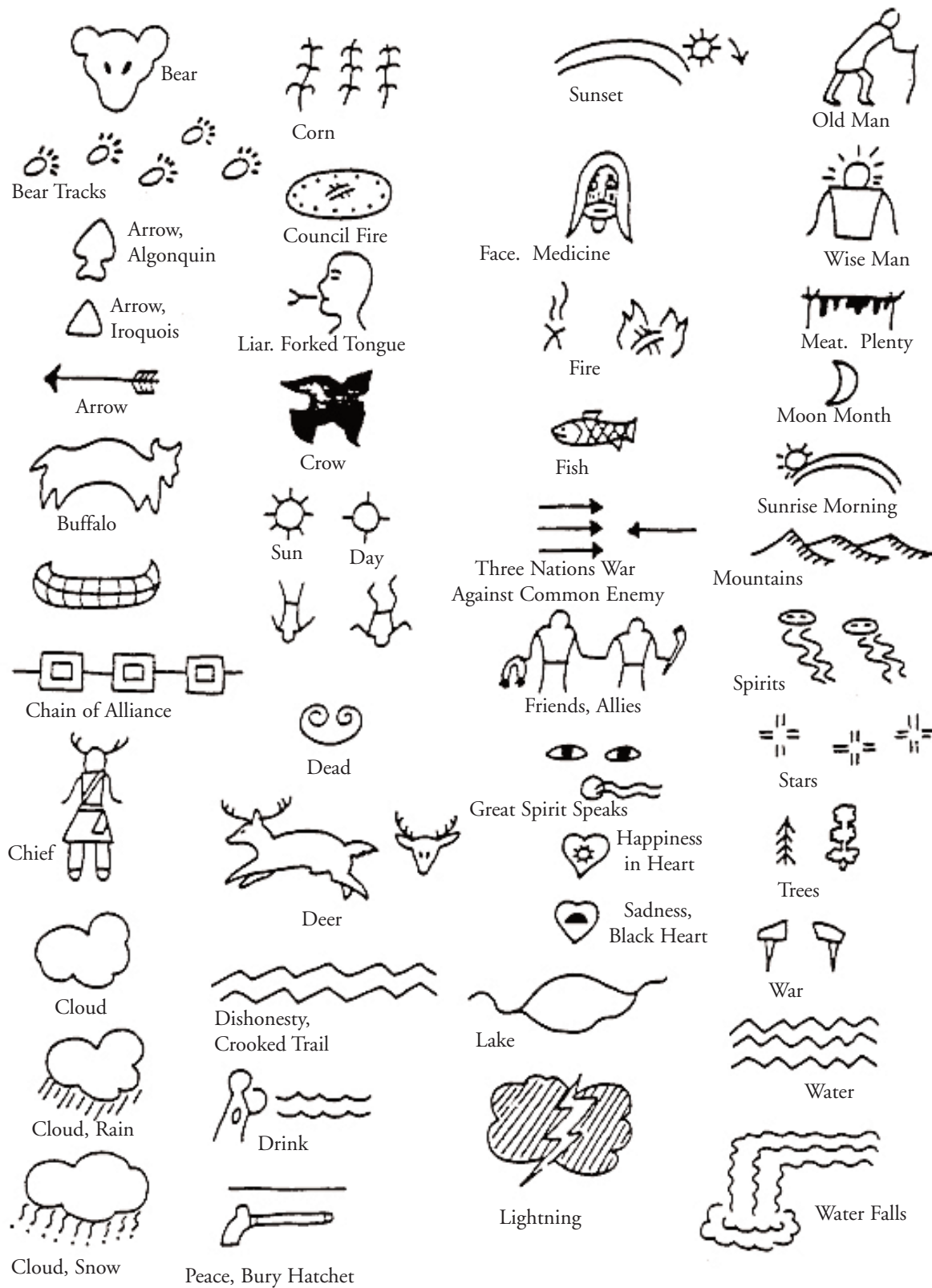
Photo by Chris Emerick, courtesy of Segerstrom Center for the Arts



NAVAJO SAND PAINTING

Black cross-bars represent pine logs; the circle, water. Figures of gods with their wives (goddesses) sit upon the logs. Round heads denote male; rectangular heads, female. Rattles and pinon sprigs bring male and female rains which bring forth vegetation. Arching over all is the rainbow goddess upon which the gods travel.

AMERICAN INDIAN SYMBOLS



These pictographs are used with the permission of Aren Akweks, Six Nations Indian Museum, Onchiota, New York.

INDIAN LEGENDS COME ALIVE!

TRANSFORMATION

LEVEL II Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

Native American lore, legends, myths, and tales provide a wealth of material to dramatize, using 'story theatre' techniques. Vivid characterizations and well-constructed plots make them easily adaptable for drama activities.

OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Create story theatre presentations using Native American myths and folklore. (**Creative Expression** and **Historical and Cultural Context**)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (**Aesthetic Valuing**)

MATERIALS:

- A collection of Indian legends and stories. Selected props and costume pieces.
- *Artsource*® audio recording of *The Quillwork Girl*.

PROGRESSION:

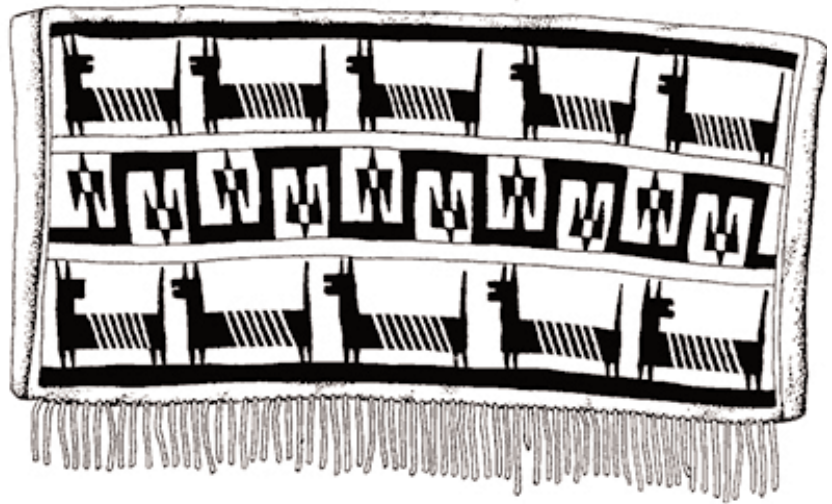
- Ask the class to choose a Native American myth or legend to dramatize. Cast one person as the narrator who will thread the story along, revealing necessary information and setting up the dramatic scenes to be acted out. Read the tale to the class and then follow these steps to dramatize a story theatre version.
 - Outline the scenes in the story to discover the dramatic thru-line and record them on the blackboard.
 - List the main characters and choose three words that describe their personalities or physical characteristics.
 - Discuss the setting of the story. How many different locales are depicted? Ask the class how these places can be represented or acted out.
 - Refer to your plot outline; divide the scenes into three parts - beginning, middle, and end.
 - Cast the scenes. (By dividing the story into three parts, different students get a chance to portray the main characters.)
- Select simple props or costume pieces to help visually tell the story.



Geri Keams
Photo by Mark Harmel

- Perform the story improvising the dialogue and action.

- After the performance, discuss the scenes emphasizing the positive things you have seen. Be sure that in class discussions you refer to the names of the characters instead of the names of the students who played the parts. Did the improvisations adequately tell the events of the story? How did the actors use their creativity to bring the story to life?



Quill embroidery design on hide, Delaware

- Improvise the scenes again with a different cast using the suggestions for expanding or improving the scenes from the first go-around.

The important thing to remember in adapting a story into a play is that the process of creating the scenes rather than the end product should be the focus. The value of improvisation is that it leaves you free to interpret and develop the understanding of the various story elements, thereby continually extending the enjoyment of the story/play experience.

EXTENSIONS:

- Perform the story without words, pantomiming all of the action and expressing the emotions through gesture.
- Use legends from other cultures for story theatre presentations.
- Listen to the *Artsource*® audio recording of *The Quillwork Girl*. Take turns retelling the story in your own words.

VOCABULARY: story theatre, improvisation, character, dialogue, dramatic action

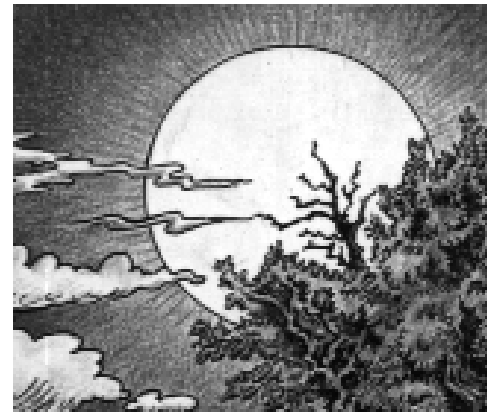
ASSESSMENT: (Aesthetic Valuing)

DESCRIBE: Describe your favorite character in the story.

DISCUSS: Discuss the steps you went through to set up the dramatic scenes.

ANALYZE: Focus on one character at a time and discuss how different people portrayed the specific character. What aspects of the character changed in the various interpretations?

TRICKSTER TALES



The native peoples of North America always put a high value on storytelling as a necessary part of life. Among the most enjoyable stories in the rich and ancient tribal collections, were those that told of a number of “animal-gods” - supernatural beings who could take human form, but who most often appeared in the shape of specific animals, like Bear, Deer, or Eagle. These animal-gods were believed to have been the first “People” who lived on earth from its earliest beginnings, and who shared it for a time with human beings after they had first appeared in the freshly-made world.

Naturally, different animals appear in the stories of different tribes, but nearly every tribe has a special group of stories featuring a being who takes the form of a particularly clever and mischievous animal. These stories have come to be called “Trickster” tales. The Trickster of some tribes of southeastern America was Hare or Rabbit; for some eastern forest tribes it was Blue Jay; and among the peoples of the wild northwest coast of the Pacific Ocean, the Trickster’s name was Raven. In California, in the Southwest, and in much of Mexico, the Trickster generally took his name from the sly dog-like animal who skulked around the outskirts of villages, hunting gophers, scavenging the refuse piles, and occasionally stealing salmon and deer meat from the drying racks. This Trickster was called Coyote.

Coyote was a favorite in the repertoire of the tribal storytellers. Like any Trickster, Coyote is a wily, crafty being who loves to get the better of others, friends or enemies, and who often gets into trouble as a result. As often as not he is shown to be proud and boastful, and to have a huge appetite that is seldom satisfied. But he is not simply and solely a tricky, trouble-making comic character. In the tales where human beings are threatened or suffering, whether from natural causes or supernatural enemies, they turn to Coyote for help which he willingly provides. Usually his comic qualities - over-confidence or greed or thoughtlessness - will get in the way and make things difficult for him. But in the end his cleverness, his determination, and his own supernatural powers will win through; his opponents will be defeated or something new of value will be given to mankind.

The Trickster Coyote tales show the strange blend of qualities that can be found in many of mankind’s greatest myths and legends. Coyote can be noble, majestic, wise and godlike. He can be powerful, brave, knowledgeable and heroic. But at the same time - often during the same story - he can be foolish and stupid, selfish and vain, deceitful and even cruel. That is the most basic and important truth that lies within all the different Trickster tales. Like Coyote, the stories say every human being has it within himself, or herself, to choose to be a hero or a buffoon; to be thoughtful or mischievous; to be wise and kind or selfish and cruel. And like Coyote, the stories remind us human beings don’t always make the right choices.



Take Coyote out of the sky," they said. "He is making too much noise with all of his shouting."

Illustration by John Kahionhes Fadden and Carol Wood,
from the book *Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children*
by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac, © 1992.

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HOW COYOTE WAS THE MOON (Kalispel - Idaho)

A long time ago there was no moon. The people got tired of going around at night in the dark. There had been a moon before, but someone stole it. So they gathered together and talked about it.

“We need to have a moon,” they said. “Who will be the moon?”

“I will do it,” said Yellow Fox. They placed him in the sky. But he shone so brightly that he made things hot at night. Thus, they had to take him down.

Then the people went to Coyote. “Would you like to be the moon? Do you think you could do a better job?”

“I sure would,” Coyote said. Then he smiled. He knew that if he became the moon he could look down and see everything that was happening on Earth.

They placed Coyote up in the sky. He did not make the nights too hot and bright. For a time the people were pleased.

“Coyote is doing a good job as the moon,” they agreed.

But Coyote, up there in the sky, could see everything that was happening on Earth. He could see whenever someone did something they were not supposed to do and he just couldn't keep quiet.

“Hey,” he would shout, so loudly everyone on Earth could hear him, “that man is stealing meat from the drying racks.” He would look down over people's shoulders as they played games in the moonlight. “Hey,” he would shout, “that person there is cheating at the moccasin game.”

Finally, all the people who wished to do things in secret got together. “Take Coyote out of the sky,” they said. “He is making too much noise with all of his shouting.”

So Coyote was taken out of the sky. Someone else became the moon. Coyote could no longer see what everyone on Earth was doing, but that hasn't stopped him from still trying to snoop into everyone else's business ever since.

MYTHS AND FOLKLORE

American Indian mythology focuses on a certain kind of story called an origin or creation myth. The origin myth is the Native American's nearest thing to the Christian Bible. This mythology explains the uncharted areas of human experience, giving form to man's imaginative explanation of the world and its mysteries. Origin myths also contain the directions and authority for ceremonies and rites.

Folk tales are secular stories. Although things happen in them which could never occur in ordinary life and are hence part of the supernatural order of events, they are told primarily for amusement and entertainment. Famous cycles like the Trickster tales are full of levity and indeed, of bawdiness. The nearest equivalent in English would be the Br'er Rabbit stories of African American origin. They often have a moral, but the moral is taken rather lightly.

The total body of oral literature that has been passed down is extremely large. Family and friends have gathered around a masterful storyteller for hundreds and hundreds of years. Storytelling sessions served the function that books do, instructing and entertaining. The experience of listening to myths and tales brought the tribe together in laughter and joyful unity. Storytelling is a way to keep cultural heritage alive, for all peoples, for all time.

SONG POEMS

ENDURING VALUES

LEVEL III Sample Lesson

INTRODUCTION:

The storytelling performance included traditional ceremonial chants or songs such as the *Beauty Way*, *Sunrise Chant*, and *Round Dance*. In Indian culture, truth, history and thought are preserved in rituals comprised of these poetic songs.

OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Compose short poems based on Navajo ceremonial chants and perform them as songs. (**Creative Expression** and **Historical and Cultural Context**)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (**Aesthetic Valuing**)

MATERIALS:

- Paper, pens, pencils.
- Simple percussion instruments: blocks, sticks, drums, etc.

PROGRESSION:

- Navajo ceremonial chants are often set to the stroke of a paddle, the rhythm of a running horse, or the thump of the corn grinding stone. Some songs are very short, while others last a whole night. The lyrics form a kind of poem, often using devices such as metaphor and personification. Here are two examples of Navajo chants:



Geri Keams

Photo by Chris Emerick, courtesy of Segerstrom Center for the Arts

- 1) *“My great corn plants,
Among them I walk,
I speak to them,
They hold out their hands to me.”*
- 2) *“The voice of thunder
Within the dark cloud,
Again and again it sounds,
The voice that beautifies the land.”*

- Ask your students to write a short poem patterned after the examples. Their subject matter can be drawn from any aspect of life and it should reveal thoughts or actions of significance. When the poems are completed, set them to a rhythm and perform them as chants or songs.

EXTENSIONS:

- Publish the completed song-poems in a class book.
- Perform the chants as a concert. Have each student make a costume piece symbolizing the theme of his or her poem to wear for the event.
- Choreograph dances to accompany the poems, explaining their messages through movement.

VOCABULARY: chant, metaphor, personification, rhythm, percussion

ASSESSMENT: (Aesthetic Valuing)

DESCRIBE: Describe your impressions of the two Navajo poems.

DISCUSS: Discuss the things you most like about the poem you wrote.

ANALYZE: Discuss how your poem is similar to either of the two Navajo poems and how it is different.

CONNECT: Share the topics that your class used for their poems and suggest other topics that would work well for this song-poem form



Pueblo pottery

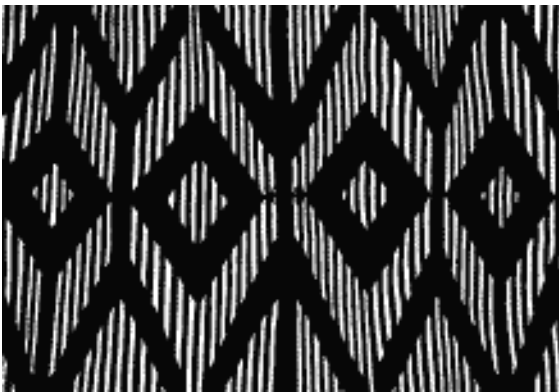


Acoma pottery

NAVAJO HISTORY

Navajo Song

“I see the Earth
I am looking at Her and smile
Because She makes me happy.
The Earth, looking back at me
is smiling too.
May I walk happily
And lightly On Her.”



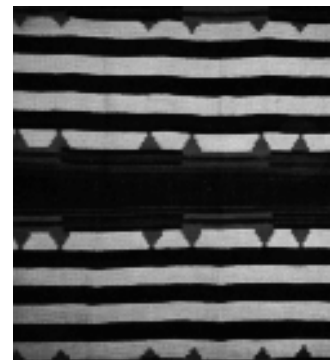
Navajo rug design

The Navajo call themselves “Dinneh” - The People. The land where they settled is the fabled “Four Corners,” embracing large chunks of the northern parts of Arizona and New Mexico and little pieces each of Utah and Colorado. To the Navajo, this land is sacred. Within these 13 million acres are breathtakingly beautiful sights not seen anywhere else on earth - the red formations of Monument Valley, the Grand Canyon, and the Painted Desert. Even the air is not like any other air; it is fragrant with the scents of juniper, mimosa, or sage.

When the Navajos arrived in the Southwest, they came as small groups of nomads, bringing only what they could carry with them. About the only solid fact we have in trying to reconstruct their past is their language, which is very similar to Athapascan, spoken by Canadian and Alaskan Indians living a thousand miles to the north.

It is generally believed that thousands of years ago the Navajo were among the Native American tribes who drifted and trickled in small groups from Asia across the Bering Strait into Alaska. These people, who later were mistakenly called “Indians,” were in reality Asians. Some crossed over the land bridge which many scientists believe once connected the two continents. Others walked across the mass of ice which covered the fog-shrouded Arctic waters during the Ice Age, following herds of mammoths and other big game ever southward toward the warming sun. These, then, were the people who became America’s first immigrants.

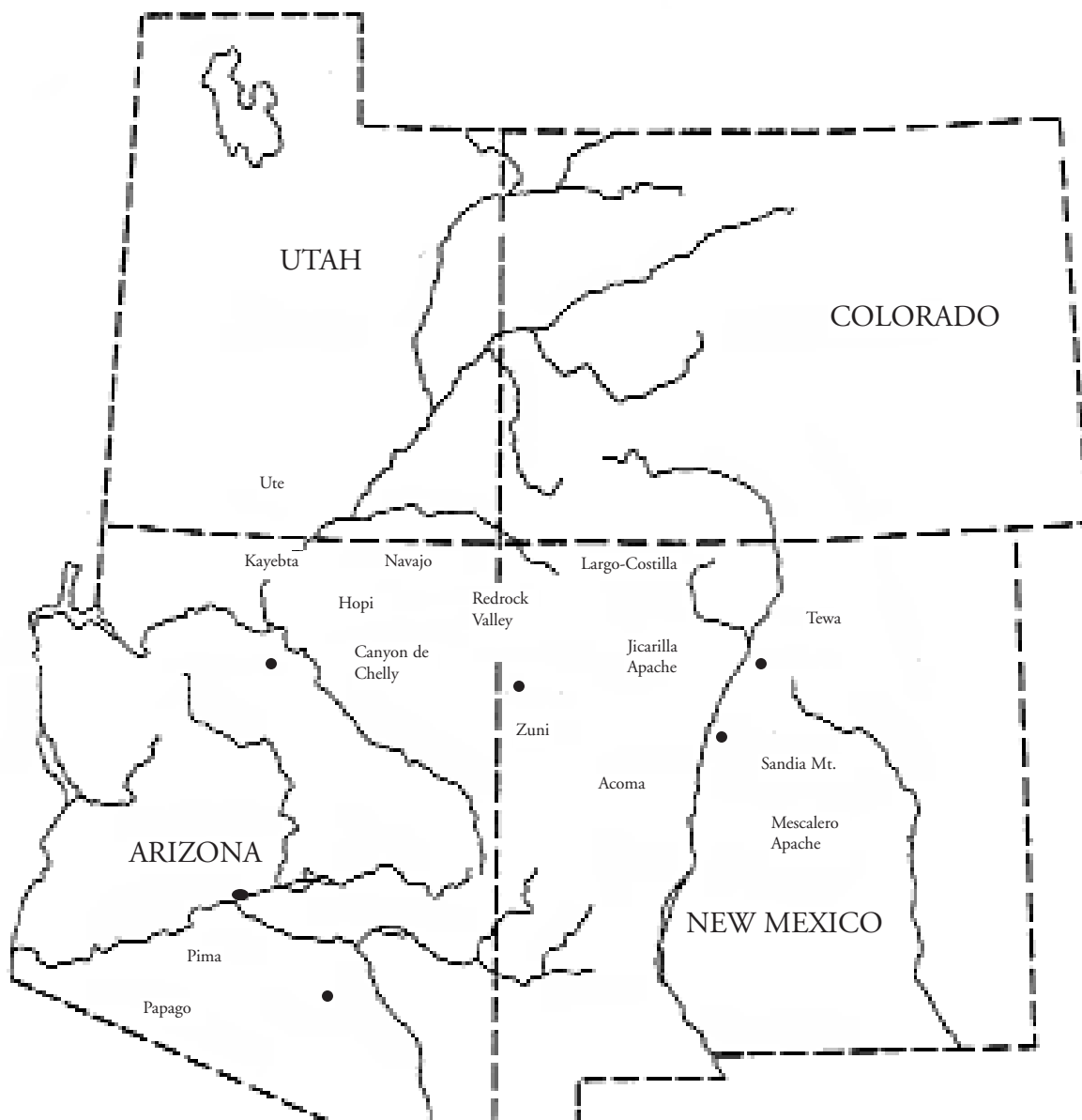
Anthropologists are inclined to place the arrival of Navajos in the Southwest at anywhere between 800 and 1400 A.D. The newcomers were a hardy and resourceful breed. At that time they had neither horses nor cattle. Their only domestic animal was the dog - an animal that had attached itself to man thousands of years before. The early Navajos had no metal. Their weapons and tools were made of wood and stone. The men hunted while the women and children looked for edible bulbs, nuts or berries. With their own hands they made whatever they needed - their weapons, their clothes, their huts.



Navajo rug design

The Navajos were, and still are, highly inventive people. Typical of their ingenuity was the sinew-baked bow which they brought to the Southwest. This weapon had greater force and accuracy than existing bows and helped them to improve their hunting prowess. Later on, they developed a rawhide moccasin boot reaching halfway to the knee, providing good protection for their legs in the thorny chaparral country.

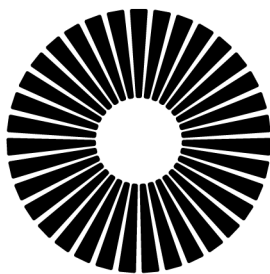
Today the Navajos are known for their masterful artistry in turquoise and silver jewelry-making and in weaving. Navajo blankets and rugs, renowned for their originality and creativity, are valued collectibles worldwide. Like many other peoples with strong traditional life, they must balance a way to live and work in modern America and still remain Navajo. Their heritage enriches us, and we can learn from and embrace the beauty of their ways.



Artsource®

*The Music Center's Study Guide
to the Performing Arts*

*A Project of the
Music Center*



MUSIC · CENTER

135 North Grand Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90012

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Introduction

ARTSOURCE®: THE MUSIC CENTER'S STUDY GUIDE TO THE PERFORMING ARTS

Artsource® highlights works of art and artists of stature from diverse cultures.

*It represents early to contemporary art forms in the disciplines of
dance, music and theatre*

*and complements the programs and performances
of the Music Center's resident companies and artist roster.*

The arts are ancient, enduring and universal forms of communication.

*Artists present their perceptions, reflections, and points of view which
influence, and are influenced by, the culture and period of time in which they exist.*

Artsource® Contributors

Project Director

Melinda Williams

Project Coordinator

Susan Cambigue-Tracey

Writers:

Dance

*Susan Cambigue-Tracey
Diana Cummins, Carole Valleskey, Madeleine Dahm, Deborah Greenfield,
Barbara Leonard, Melinda Williams*

Music

*Rosemarie Cook-Glover
Ed Barguiarena, Susan Cambigue-Tracey, Barbara Leonard,
Connie Hood, Annette Simons, Marilyn Wulliger,
Diana Zaslove, John Zeretzke*

Theatre

*Barbara Leonard
Kathryn Johnson*

Technical Production donated by

Paul Tracey

Layout and Logo* Design

Maureen Erbe Design

*Received the LULU AWARD for excellence in graphic design and advertising,
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Additional Artwork & Artsource® Logo Graphic

H. P. Law & Partners

*The Music Center of Los Angeles County, wishes to thank
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in the classroom.*

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Artsource® units in their classrooms.*

Mark Slavkin
Vice President for Education

Melinda Williams
Director of Education