

SHARED FICTIONS: ORIGINS, VOL. I

By Tiffany Petty

HISTORY- EARLY HUMAN

ORIGIN STORIES

PSYCHOLOGY

2-WEEK SHORT STORY STUDY

Torchlight Constellation Series : Levels 1-5

A SHORT STORY &
CREATIVE WRITING
STUDY



FEATURING:

2-WEEK STUDY SCHEDULE

10 LESSONS

RETELLINGS WITH INQUIRY-BASED DISCUSSION

BIG IDEAS IN LITERATURE & HISTORY

STRUCTURED & PACED CREATIVE WRITING

VOCABULARY

EXTENSIONS

OPTIONAL ALIGNMENT WITH HISTORIAN'S TOOLKIT, YEAR 1

Week 2 Schedule

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Reading, Discussion, & Writing	Lesson 1, p. 28 & Discuss	Lesson 2, p. 35 & Discuss	Lesson 3, p. 41 & Discuss	Lesson 4, p. 46 & Discuss & Plan Writing Assign.	Lesson 5, p. 49 & Discuss
Activities	Locate China, Colombia, and Peru on a globe				
Vocabulary	Study	Study & Word Wander	Study	Study	Study & Word Wander
Historian's Toolkit	Read Lesson #5 & Reference Timeline Locate Israel, China, Kenya, S. Africa, & Spain on a Globe		Complete Workbook Pages Species & Innovations Map: <i>Homo erectus</i> and Fire		

PREP

Cut out Vocabulary Study Cards for week 2

WEEK 2 SUPPLIES

Creative Writing Notebook

Large cylinder pencils for small hands, and a large eraser

Globe

Optional: Historian's Toolkit & activity supplies

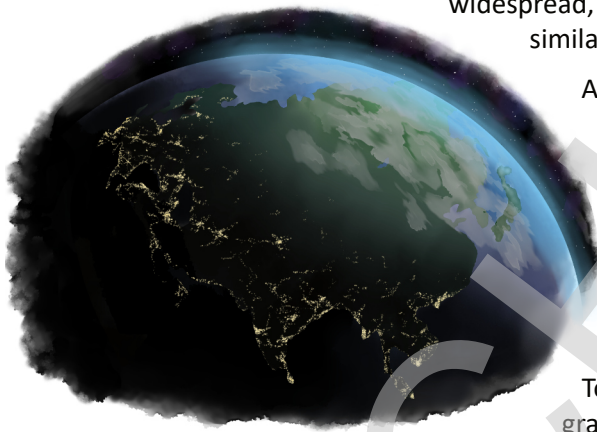
Optional: Torchlight Species & Innovation Cards, Map, and Timeline

LESSON 1

What is an Earth origin story?

An **Earth origin story** is sometimes also called a **creation story**, or **cosmogonies** (*kahz-Mah-guh-nee-z*) because it explains how a world, and sometimes its rules, came to be. To satisfy curiosity and questions like, "How did the ground get beneath my feet? Where did the sun come from? Where did the very first tree come from?" people would weave together outrageous tales! Many of those tales included a magical being that made our world, because that was something people understood, that beings, like them, could make things. And it makes for a better story than, *poof*, the world popped into existence, the end. It can also create a shared belief or memory, hearing the same story of Earth's origins as you grow up. This shared experience can make people feel a sense of belonging, making it easier to work and live together.

If you haven't figured it out yet, there are many types of origin stories. We already learned about Why Tales, and this could definitely fall under that category, but because Earth origin stories are so common and widespread, they make up their own variety of origin story that shares similarities, namely answering: where did the Earth come from?



An Earth creation story is usually a magical tale that people have been sharing for thousands of years or more. Long before humans had science books, telescopes, or computers to study the stars, people wondered where the earth and everything around them came from. Although they didn't know the science of how they themselves were made, they knew they came from somewhere: their mothers. So, they thought, the earth must come from somewhere, too.

To satisfy that wonder, people from all different cultures, grandparents, parents, siblings, and neighbors would tell creation stories. Over time the sharing of creative ideas would start mixing together until a group came up with a story they really liked, one that made sense to them based on observation, and that would get passed down through the generations, creating a shared experience.

And we have to hand it to the communities that came up with some of these stories. They added a bit of creativity and a feeling of certainty to very uncertain beginnings. There are lots of ways to describe these stories: wild, daring, and even intriguing. Snakes become continents, and dragons become rivers! But other parts are pretty brilliant. People create stories based on what they know, so a funny thing happens with creation stories, the landscape created in the story tends to reflect the landscape the people who created it live in. And the materials the creator-figure uses are the same as the resources and phenomena in the area the story comes from. These stories tell us a bit about the people who both listened to them and passed them along. They tell us about the landscape when they were created and what resources were important to their survival and way of life.

Before we investigate further, though, let's take a look at the science behind how we understand our world's beginnings. Watch this video [here](#) to learn about our real cosmic origins. When you're done, answer this question: Do you think there was any way early humans and ancient peoples could have known or found out the detailed science behind our current understanding of how the earth was formed? As we read more creation stories, keep in mind that people, even long ago, could be brilliant. They were limited to what they could observe and test at the time, and this is why their stories reflect their surroundings. So, let's explore that a bit more.

Storytelling is not isolated to literature and imagination. It can also be a bridge to history, geography, culture, and science. We can use stories to remember our past and pass along knowledge, but first we need to learn to analyze them a little, so we can understand as much as possible about what they are offering.

Impact of environment on origin stories

Take a look at the images below and become landscape detectives! See if you can match the landscape picture to the correct Earth origin story.

Note to Learning Partner: Today's lesson requires learners to listen for context clues in the story that help them match the image to the tale. If they struggle, tell them to listen closely for words that describe the landscape.



❖ Awakening the Earth

In the beginning, the world was a completely flat, silent, and dark plain of dry red sand with no plants, waterholes, or mountains. Suddenly, powerful ancestor spirits woke up and burst through the hard, dusty crust of the ground from deep below, bringing the bright sun up into the sky with them. As these ancient spirits walked, ran, and danced across the barren terrain, their heavy footprints and sliding bodies carved deep grooves into the dirt, sculpting the sandhills, rocky valleys, and massive desert landmarks. When they grew tired from their long journeys across the dry sun-baked earth, they sank back down into the ground to sleep, becoming the very rocks and red soil beneath our feet.



❖ Raven Crafting the Land

There was nothing but water and Raven, an eternal being, when the world began. Suddenly, and without cause, stones and rocks hurled themselves from the sky to create land! High above freezing, boundless oceans with new lands dotting the waters, Raven beat his powerful wings to push back the crashing waves and create the first solid shores. Because his world was built from the icy, cold mud along the coastline, Raven began shaping mountains directly from the damp clay, then creatures, by waving his feathers to bring fat mountain sheep and lumbering bears to life.



❖ Fishing Up the Islands

For a people surrounded by the vast, rolling blue waves of the Pacific, the earth did not start as dry ground, but as an endless sea where the clever demigod Māui sat aboard his wooden canoe, or waka. Holding a precious, magical fishhook tightly carved from the smooth bone of his grandmother's jaw, Māui cast his long line deep into the dark ocean currents. Suddenly, something colossal snagged his line, and with a mighty pull that made his muscles ache, he hauled a gigantic, thrashing fish resembling a stingray out of the water, which instantly froze and flattened into the solid green hills of the North Island. Māui's long wooden canoe then became the South Island, and his heavy stone anchor became the small

island pinned to the bottom of the sea.

Note to Learning Partner: The first story is one Australian Aboriginal Dreaming tale, which matches the last landscape. The second story is an Inuit creation story that matches the second photo, and the third is a Maori creation tale that matches the first image.

THE DREAM THREAD: AN UITOTO AMAZON EARTH ORIGIN STORY

Retold & Illustrated by Tiffany Petty

A long, long time ago, before birds, tall trees, or soft muddy ground covered the Earth, there was absolute nothingness. Only a quiet, ghostly illusion floating in the dark emptiness. In this silent space lived a wise maker of things named Buinaima, who was known as the Father of Illusion. He had only a faint memory of coming into being from nothing. At first, he could not see or touch anything real; there was only a mysterious, shadowy fog around him.

Buinaima wanted to build a beautiful world, so he decided to use the magic inside his own mind. He reached out into the empty space and caught a tiny piece of the shadowy fog. To keep it from slipping away, he carefully tied the empty illusion to a thin, imagination thread inside one of his dreams. Then, he breathed a warm, gentle breath onto it to keep it steady and safe.

Next, Buinaima spit onto the cosmic dream thread. He pressed, wound, and shaped it with his hands until the soft illusion began to feel like a warm, fluffy ball of raw cotton.

To make the ball solid and stable, Buinaima placed the soft dream-ball beneath his feet. He began to stomp and stamp his feet hard all around and against the illusion, packing the magical shape down tightly over and over again. With each heavy stamp, the blurry mirage became harder and thicker, and the waters seeped up to the surface, until it finally turned into the beautiful earth covered in oceans. Buinaima smiled and floated down to rest in his brand-new world.

But the new earth was still bare and quiet, so Buinaima decided to fill it. He again spat into the water, then placed his toe atop it. It bore his weight. He continued to form land though his spittle, shaping it with his fingers. He blew out a soft mist from his mouth across the flat land. Wherever his breath and saliva touched the dark soil, amazing things began to sprout. Giant green trees, thick vines, and colorful jungle flowers burst upward out of the ground, creating a deep, beautiful rainforest. Finally, Buinaima lay down comfortably on the soft dirt and across the waters and stretched his arms high above, forming a beautiful, protective sky like a giant blue roof over his new home.



Note: This narrative is told by the Uitoto (also spelled Witoto and Huitoto) people, an Indigenous nation of 30 tribes living in parts of the Amazon rainforest, spanning the countries of Colombia and Peru. There are as many tellings of this origin story as there are tribes. This is only one.

DISCUSSION

Can you tell me what happened in this origin story?

Think about what you just heard:

What happened?

How did it happen?

What order did the events happen in?

Recounting a story in your own words can be very helpful in better understanding it and remembering it better later.

LANDSCAPE DISCUSSION

Now that you've read both Earth origin stories, can you spot how the Pangu story was influenced by the landscapes of China?

The Pangu story first mentions how the thick, heavy dark parts of the egg settled to become the fertile mud that the terraced hills of China are known for. When Pangu lays his tired body down, it transforms into the monsoon winds, rain clouds, and thunder, all common weather in parts of China. His limbs and torso become the five great mountains of China (Mount Tai, Heng South, Hua, Heng North, and Song), and his life force becomes the great rivers (Yangtze, Yellow, Pearl, and Heilongjiang, and many more). Lastly, his teeth become jade, a stone commonly found and valued in Chinese culture, and his skin and fur become the famed Chinese bamboo.

Notice that this creation story answers questions specific to China's landscapes. The people who observed their landscape included answers to how it was formed within their creation story. This is how landscape can influence storytelling. The story tells us what the people wondered about, what they saw, and what they found important.

What about the Dream Thread story? How was that influenced by the landscapes of the Amazon rainforest?

Just like Pangu, the Amazonian story starts from nothingness, also called "chaos," and Buinaima forms everything in his mind and solidifies it with spit. The use of spit might seem a bit funny to some, but let's think about it: what is spit made of? The answer is water! And in a rainforest, water is what makes all things grow.

Later, he forms a fluffy ball that seems to be made of raw cotton. Cotton is a native plant within the Amazon basin. Buinaima continues to use his spit to create land, and the mist of his breath to create all the giant trees, thick vines, and colorful jungle flowers. If you look back at the pictures of the rainforest, you might notice that mist is a common part of the rainforest landscape, and all the plants mentioned are native to that biome.

Again, a great example of how creation stories are heavily influenced by the landscape where they are created and told.

Below are pictures from another biome. What landscape fingerprints do you think might end up in an origin story from this location?

This is your opinion, so each person will have a different answer, but thinking about the possibilities will help you develop your skills as an earth origin story detective.

