
SKYWOMAN



GRADE: FIRST

SUBJECTS: ELA, SCIENCE, VISUAL ARTS

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SKYWOMAN

The Story of Sky Woman according to the Haudenosaunee

Long before the world was created, there was an island in the sky where the Sky People lived. One day, a tree toppled over and tore a hole in the sky. A pregnant Sky Woman grew curious about the hole. She came near – so near that she tumbled through the opening. She grabbed at the tree of life, but that didn't stop her fall. It took her a long time to fall, dancing like a seed on the breeze. She was still clutching the plants when a flock of geese swooped to catch her.

The birds set her down on the Great Turtle's back. Other animals dove to the ocean floor and brought mud up to the surface. They packed the mud on the Great Turtle's back. Over and over, they dove down until they had brought up enough mud to make room for trees and plants to grow. Then they dove some more. When they were finished, they had made a whole world on the Great Turtle's back.

Sky Woman circled the edges of the turtle's back and with each step the land swelled. She scattered the seeds from the tree of life that sank deeply into the mud. Up grew the towering oaks and sweetgrass, the vegetables and strawberries, and plants that give medicine. And now that there was plenty to eat, the animals came to live, each bearing their own gifts.

First came the long and slender cougar gripping with her claws and steering with her tail. With stealth vision she prowls the swamps alone at night, guarding her territory. Cautious, smart, and swift, she symbolizes a good hunter and protector.

Next came the long legged heron wading patiently in the slow moving water. Her long dagger like bill lets her pick for fish and dig in the sand for crabs. Herons have good natures and will often dance about on their long legs if they hear the right song. Such a very big bird, it was not easy for her to lift off the ground, but once she was in the air she could fly very well indeed. A good luck sign if you are fishing, the heron brings peace, stability, and harmony.

Out slithered the clever snakes. Agile and quick, they smell with their tongues, and blend masterfully into the leaves or when warming themselves on a sunny day. They can stay still for hours waiting for unsuspecting prey. There are many different kinds of snakes and they are said to make good friends and are used for healing and protection. The symbol for medicine is two snakes coiled around a staff. For some they are messengers, sent to bring vital rain for crops and water in harsh climates.

Dolphins keep our oceans in balance. Mammals, not fish, dolphins are social creatures. They make life-long friendships and live in groups called pods. Mamas can often be seen playing in the waves with their children; teaching them the skills they need to survive. They produce clicking sounds and echoes to find objects and prey. When they sleep, their mind is half awake so that they remember to come up for air. To see a dolphin near the shore is a good sign, meaning good luck or protection is coming.

Quick and nimble, deer can be our messengers. With eyes on the sides of their head, they can warn us of what is up ahead. Their cupped ears rotate in different directions, making them hard to sneak up on. Their feeding habits bring sunlight to the forest floor and help plants grow and thrive. Deer remind us that we should live lives that are balanced and graceful.

And that is how the animals and plants came to be with Sky Woman on Turtle Island. Sky Woman gave birth, and when she did, she became the mother of the two-legged people. The Haudenosaunee have told Sky Woman's story for countless generations. Turtle Island is what they call the land that was created thanks to Sky Woman and the Great Turtle.

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AUTHOR: KELLY JAMES

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STANDARDS

ELA

Standard 12: Read independently and comprehend a variety of texts for the purposes of reading for enjoyment, acquiring new learning, and building stamina; reflect on and respond to increasingly complex text over time.

- 12.1 Engage in whole and small group reading with purpose and understanding.
- 12.2 Read independently for sustained periods of time.
- 12.3 Read and respond according to task and purpose to become self-directed, critical readers and thinkers.

SCIENCE

1.L.5A.2 Construct explanations of the stages of development of a flowering plant as it grows from a seed using observations and measurements.

1.L.5B. Conceptual Understanding: Plants have basic needs that provide energy in order to grow and be healthy. Each plant has a specific environment where it can thrive. There are distinct environments in the world that support different types of plants. These environments can change slowly or quickly. Plants respond to these changes in different ways.

1.L.5B.2 Develop and use models to compare how the different characteristics of plants help them survive in distinct environments (including deserts, forests, and grasslands).

1.E.4B.2 Obtain and communicate information to explain ways natural resources can be conserved (such as reducing trash through reuse, recycling, or replanting trees).

VISUAL ARTS

I can use and combine materials, techniques and processes to make art.

MATERIALS

- informational text read-alouds (for teachers and students)
- white construction paper
- student scissors
- paint
- glue
- various art medium tools

INTRODUCTION

- 1.The teacher will introduce the lesson with the SkyWoman [video](#) and will ask the students to demonstrate how they think seeds move and grow with their bodies in the form of dance.
- 2.The teacher will discuss fiction and nonfiction text with students.
- 3.The teacher will explain that the dancers are visually demonstrating seeds traveling and plants growing, various plant habitats, and how humans and plants/animals live in harmony when they respect one another.

OBJECTIVE

- The students will design the life cycle of a seed in the style of the artist Eric Carle.
- The students will design paper inspired by Eric Carle's style using white paper, a variety of paint colors, and medium tools.

LESSON

1. The teacher will read an informational text about plants ("From Seed to Plant" by Gail Gibbons) to the students and create an informational word web.
2. The students can add to the word web with information they obtained from the SkyWoman [video](#) and/or the read-alouds of "From Seed to Plant," "We Plant a Seed," or "The Tiny Seed."
 - Suggested text for students to read for instructional purposes: "We Plant a Seed" by Scholastic.
3. The teacher will use a [video](#) about Eric Carle and the artistic-informational text from "The Tiny Seed" to introduce and model the style of the artist's work.
4. The students will design paper in the style of Eric Carle by using white paper, a variety of paint colors, and medium tools.
5. Once the paint has dried the students will cut, tear, and glue illustrations using art paper to visually demonstrate the life cycle of a plant.

CLOSURE

Students will work in small groups and share two informational facts about the life cycle of a plant and share one fun fact about creating artwork in the style of Eric Carle.

ASSESSMENT

In this informal assessment the teacher will observe students' completed artwork and small group partner discussion to evaluate student comprehension of informational facts, science standards, and visual art procedures.

RESOURCES

Carle, Eric. *The Tiny Seed*. Little Simon, 2018.

Eric Carle in Seinem Atelier, YouTube, 23 Nov. 2018,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqqtq1UaTiE.

Gibbons, Gail. *From Seed to Plant*. Scholastic Inc., 1991.

Gordon, Sharon, and Dana Regan. *We Plant a Seed*. Troll, 2000.