

The Jicarilla Apache Origin Story

Unit # 1 Lesson # 1 Fourth Grade

Lesson Overview

The Jicarilla Apache have a relationship to the natural world that goes back to the beginning of time when their people emerged from the underworld. Students will learn about the Jicarilla Apache origin story and their relationship to the earth and animals through telling of the Origin Story and Emergence, and the Monster Slayer's Conquering of the Monster Elk as highlighted through storytelling from tribal elders and historians Maureen Olson, Dr. Veronica E. Velarde Tiller and Bryan Vigil and tribal member Jennifer Muskrat-Velarde. The power of animals in Jicarilla belief is illustrated through tribal elder Everett Serafin's story of the Monster Elk.

Time Frame: 60 Minutes

Inquiry Questions:

1. What is oral history, and why is this method of communication important to the Jicarilla Apache people? How can the inclusion of oral histories affect our understanding of the past and of history?
2. What does the Jicarilla Apache creation story tell us about the importance of the land to the Jicarilla people?
3. What does *The Monster Elk* by Everett Serafin tell us about the importance of animals to the Jicarilla Apache?
4. How does the creation story support the idea that Jicarilla people have lived in what is now the American West for many thousands of years?

Colorado Academic Standards:

CO State History Standard 1: GLE.1-EO.a Draw inferences about Colorado history from primary sources such as journals, diaries, maps, treaties, oral histories, etc.

CO State History Standard 1: GLE.1-EO.b. – Develop a sequencing of events in Colorado History and Jicarilla Apache History relationships using primary sources to understand the history of Colorado’s development.

Materials:

- Video Lesson: The Jicarilla Apache Creation Story
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGbCkoXdn-4>
- Oral History Analysis Work Sheet
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/oralhistoryworksheetpdf>

Source material:

- First source interviews and transcripts from the Jicarilla Apache Nation
- “The Jicarilla Apache Tribe, A History” by Dr. Veronica E. Velarde Tiller
- *The Monster Elk* by Everett Serafin

Background Knowledge/Contextual Paragraph for Teachers:

The Origin Story of the Jicarilla Apache is an oral tradition that has been told for generations upon generations. In this story, the Jicarilla Apache come from the underworld. When their lives are over, they go back to the earth, not just to be buried, but for their spirits to travel to their original homeland deep within. These oral traditions enabled the Jicarilla to pass down critical information for hundreds and thousands of years.

Educators can share information about oral tradition and story-telling, and invite students to relate their own family stories that have been passed down for generations. After watching the video and hearing the Origin Story, discuss it with students using Inquiry Questions. More information about the Jicarilla can be found in the [two-page history book insert](#). Oral traditions of origin and other important stories and teachings are non-fiction

and are sometimes told with personal variation, with key teachings and knowledge remaining the same for every generation.

Building Background Knowledge for the Student:

Students will hear and watch source materials to learn about the Jicarilla Apache way of life. In this introductory lesson, students will hear from the Jicarilla telling their oral tradition about their origins and the meaning of the land, water, animal and plant life. Invite students to take notes to remember special facts and the order of events.

Instructional Procedures and Strategies:

1. Hand out the [Oral History Analysis worksheet](#). Explain to students that they will be listening to a story very important to the Jicarilla Apache people. Keep in mind our Inquiry Questions from before. What can this story tell us about their people's history? How can students reflect their own family, community and cultural histories?
2. Have students read through the work sheet and watch/listen to the video once without taking notes. Discuss content points and take questions as needed. Then, play the video a second time so that students can fill out the worksheet as they watch/listen.
3. Students can prepare a story timeline based on the events of the Jicarilla Apache Origin Story. Students should include the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

Critical Content:

Origin stories have value both in building identity and sharing beliefs.

Key Skills:

Listening to source materials and finding the main point and drawing inferences.

Creating a chronological timeline of events.

Critical Language (vocabulary in English):

Origin, tradition, emergence, underworld

Variations/Extensions:

Students who want to learn more can research origin stories of other Native Americans in the region such as the Ute, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Pueblo, and share them with the class.

Students can write down their own story from birth including a timeline of significant events and outcomes. Students can also share stories passed down by generations from within their own families.

Formative Assessment Options:

The work that students complete as a project (Origin Story timeline and personal story) and the discussions that students have with the teacher will be a formative form of assessment. Ask the open-ended questions included and encourage in-depth responses. Consider grading or evaluating the completion of the oral history analysis worksheet.

Texts for Independent Reading or for Class Read Aloud to Support the Content

Lesson 1 Background and Reading Material:

From *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe, A History* by Veronica Tiller

In the beginning Black Sky and Earth Woman bore Supernaturals who dwelt within the body of their mother, the Earth. Only darkness prevailed in this underworld, where all living things dwelt, and where Black Hac' ct'cin, the first offspring and Supreme Supernatural, created the first ancestral man and woman, animals, and birds out of clay, based on the impression of his own form.

The sole source of light was the eagle plumes that the people used as torches, but these provided inadequate illumination. Consequently, the numerous minor Supernaturals made a miniature Sun and Moon, which

were allowed to make one circuit of the heavens. The light cast by these two bodies proved unsatisfactory, so they were brought down and enlarged. The second set was tested and permitted to rise and set four times until it provided sufficient light.

No sooner were the Sun and Moon created than some evil shamans attempted to destroy them. Angered by this, Hac ct'cin allowed the Sun and Moon to escape to this earth. The people pondered their misfortune, consulted with each other, sang and prayed, and considered how they could restore their two sources of light. The only alternative, they concluded, was to follow the Sun and Moon. Thus the Jicarillas were united as a people; their emergence from the underworld was necessitated by their attempt to recover the light that they had lost.

When the earth was dry and safe, the people and animals traveled in all four directions in clockwise fashion. As they traveled, small groups began to break off and settle down; as they settled, the Supernaturals gave them different names and languages. The Jicarillas, however, continued to circle. The Supreme Deity was getting angry and impatient with their indecisiveness and asked them where they wanted to live. They replied, "Near the center of the earth." The Creator then made four sacted rivers to delineate the boundaries of their country: the Arkansas, Canadian, Rio Grande, and Pecos. This land became the Holy Land for the Jicarillas. They believe that they are the true descendants of the original people who emerged from the underworld, and that they retain the only true language.

The holy people, with the guidance and help of the Hac ct'cin, the ultimate power, facilitated their own ascent. All the powers that these underworld creatures possessed were used. These powers were given to them by Hac' ct'cin before their world debut, but during the course of the upward journey more ceremonies were given to them.

At the start of the journey a ritual was performed. Four mounds of earth that had been piled in a row began to grow into huge mountains, rising toward the hole through which the Sun and Moon had escaped. Then the mountains stopped growing, making it impossible for the people and animals to complete their upward journey. Again it became necessary to use imagination and to perform ceremonies. Several different types of ladders were constructed from feathers, but they proved to be too weak. Failure was not what Hac ct'cin envisioned; thus, he constructed four

ladders of sunbeams and the people and animals were able to continue their ascent. All journeyed up to the opening with the exception of an old man and woman, who were too weak to climb and chose not to leave the land of their youth. They warned that Jicarillas would return to this underworld at death. After their emergence, the people and animals discovered that the earth was covered with water, symbolizing that life on earth was not to be easy. The Wind Deity offered to roll back the waters in the four directions to form the oceans. In his zealousness, he dried up all the waters, leaving nothing for the living creatures to drink. Prayers were offered, and soon rivers, lakes, and streams appeared. The people discovered that the earth was inhabited by monsters, who were eventually slain by one of the culture heroes, Monster Slayer. Finally, with the help of other Super-naturals, all obstacles that made the earth an unsafe place were eliminated.

The Monster Elk by Everett Serafin

This story is about a monstrous Elk known as 'Tsas' that killed people. The monster slayer was summoned to kill the Giant Elk, but it was not easy. Then a lizard came along and suggested to Monster Slayer that he clothe himself in the garments of the lizard to disgust himself when approaching the Elk. Then there came a Gopher who offered his help by digging a tunnel under the sleeping Elk. The Gopher dug under the Elk and then it pulled the hair from under the Elk's arm. The Monster Slayer then had an easy shot with his bow and arrow. He shot the Elk through the heart. The Elk trenched the ground in the four direction until it died. The Elk was told that it will no longer be huge and can no longer hurt people but will be their source of food. We believe all animals have spirit, that is why we pray before we hunt and after we have harvested the animal.