



Indian Land Tenure
FOUNDATION



Karuk Tribe: Nanu'avaha

Lesson 4: Karuk Oral Traditions – Coyote Story

Grade 4

ELA Common Core Content Standards

Reading Standard for Informational Text 1, 2, 3, 5, 6
Reading Standards Foundational Skills 4
Writing Standards 3, 8
Speaking and Listening Standards 1, 2, 4
Language Standards 3

Estimated duration:

Two one-hour sessions

Goal: Retell the Karuk story of how “Coyote Trades His Song” and explain how this story helps teach many concepts, among which are geography, customs, and oral traditions.

Background: The Karuk way of life is known to us through **píkvah** (origin stories) that have been told and re-told, heard and re-heard for countless generations. Listening to the stories together, we again re-imagine “the times before” human existence, “when the animals, plants, rocks were people.” These First People are called the **ikxaréeyav**¹ (or often in English, “Spirit People”). The stories are dramatic retellings of the ancient actions and interactions of these First Peoples. The Karuk, like most indigenous peoples, traditionally only tell stories when it is cold enough for snow to be in the high mountains. Please respect this tribal code.

These First People understood their responsibility to figure out how the yet-to-come humans should live. Hearing the stories, we learn that they fulfilled that responsibility through repeated sequences of contemplation, discussion, inspiration, and both collaborative and random experimentation. As human re-hearers, we inherit the same ancient responsibilities of the First People, each of us in our own way trying to figure out “how people should be living.” We also inherit their time-proven methods of proceeding as well.

Rehearing the stories, the lives of the First People function as thought-templates for the listeners, as examples (both good and bad) of how to think about our place and our conduct in the world. Káruk multi-species storytelling provides us with a shared imagined background for understanding complex relationships between ourselves and the many other creatures with which we still live today.

Origin Stories usually carry a great deal of cultural weight, sometimes melodramatically so. But many of the stories bear that weight lightly with the help of ironic humor.

¹ Pronounced, Ick-xah-RAY-yahv – the “x” is a “h” sound made at the very back of the throat. See Karuk

The survival and flourishing of American Indian Peoples depends on their ability to know, retain, make use of, and pass on their special connections with their homelands. Traditions, origin stories, and prayers that provide a sense of tribal uniqueness and identity originate in special places, from land-related incidents or from natural gifts of the land. Additionally, Tribal nations were, and to differing extents, still are supported and sustained by their lands.

The story we will learn helps us make sense of our surroundings in many ways; one of which is through geography. It also teaches us valuable lessons about other Karuk Oral Traditions: song and prayer. The Karuk, like many other Native Peoples, sing songs to protect themselves while traveling: either by foot or by boat, and nowadays by automobile and airplanes. In former times dangers were many, among which rattlesnake bites and drowning numbered. The songs could be personal ones, or communality “owned,” and are sometimes made up of texts, but perhaps more often are not comprised of words but rather only vocables. The songs sung by coyote and the “nephew” in this lesson are of this latter type.

Prayers are, and were, integral aspects of daily life as well as religious ceremonies. These, too, are both individual and communal, and there are many prayers that certain members of a tribal community must keep private, such as those known only by the **fatavéenaan** (priest in world-renewal ceremony). Literally translated, the title fatavéenaan refers to the priest’s enigmatic duties: “The person who prays that which is unknown.” For those of us who never hold this position, these duties will never be known – and to try to find them out goes not only against sacred tribal code, but will bring harm to those who cannot stem their curiosity.

There are as many different oral traditions, such as stories, song and prayer, and styles of performing as there are different cultures and peoples. In this lesson, the students will learn some concepts related to oral traditions, and how to demonstrate respect for others’ beliefs and styles of performing and offer them ways to analyze story elements.

Many individuals consider their beliefs and ways of life as important everyday elements that contribute to rich tradition and cultural heritage. The stories and song that convey those of Native peoples are considered by many to be recounting truths, and not simply to be disregarded or labeled as “myths” or “fairy tales.” Respect for others’ beliefs and ways of life will make this lesson an experience that teaches appreciation of diverse communities.

Theme/Big Idea:	Stories shape our identity
Big Questions:	How do we show respect?
Vocabulary:	plot, setting, character, protagonist, antagonist, minor character, static character

Materials:

Coyote Trades His Song: Story Analysis - Vocabulary for discussion (included)

Coyote Trades His Song, retold from Nettie Reuben’s version (included)

Karuk Vocabulary – (included) at end of lesson plan

Visual Maps, (included)

Large paper and crayons, markers, paints, etc., (not included)

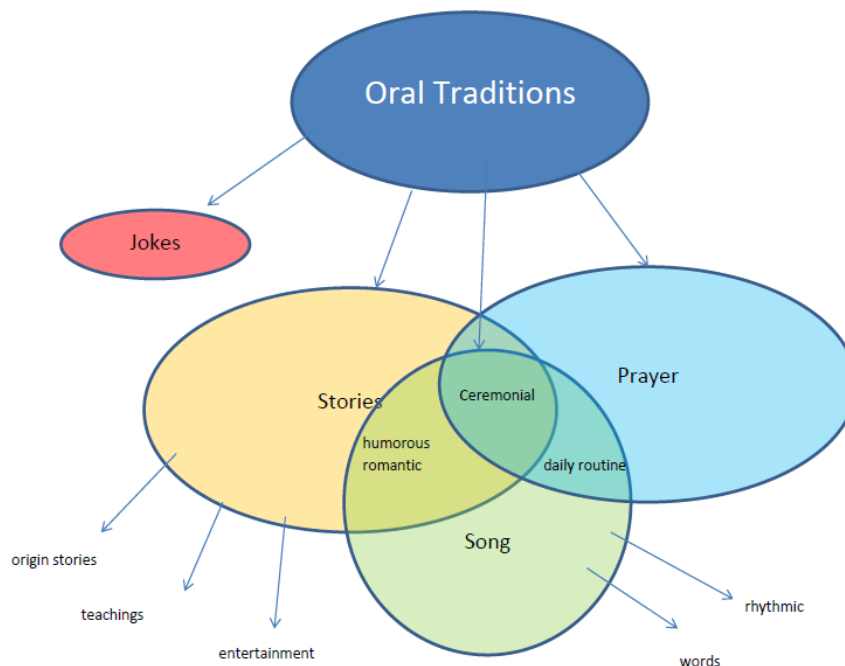
Preparation: Copy the story *Coyote Trades His Song* (1 copy per student). Copy **Comprehension Questions** and **Cause and Effect** worksheets (1 copy per student). Copy the vocabulary for story analysis for a projector (or prepare poster that the class can see easily).

Student Background: Explain briefly what we mean by “oral traditions” – e.g., a system for preserving a group's beliefs, customs, and history, in which members of the group tell their children about them, and the children tell their children, and so on.

(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/british/oral-tradition>)

Explain that because Native Americans did not have a written language, there is no written history of the Native Americans. The record of Native American life comes to us in a large part through the writings of historians and anthropologists, but it can also be traced through the so-called oral traditions of each tribe. These are perhaps most important to Native Peoples, as they teach their origins, ways of life and beliefs from their own perspectives.

Discussion: Write “Oral Traditions” up on the board to prompt discussion about what forms oral traditions can take. Begin with “jokes” as a type of oral tradition and ask students for other types (Suggested answers: stories, songs, chants, speeches, and prayers). Explain that these can be further broken down into separate categories, such as origin stories, myths, history, fairy tales and legends from “stories;” adjectives such as the sacred, teaching lessons, and humor can be used to describe many types of oral tradition. Example Venn Diagram to map out:



Preparing for Activity: Tell the students you are going to tell them a “coyote story.” Ask them if they know the Karuk word for this character (*pihnêefich*² – pronounced “peeHNAY-a-fitch” and translates also into “little widower” or “old man”). Explain that this character is very typical of Native American stories, and that there is a whole category that contains hundreds of stories, sometimes called “Trickster tales” because Coyote often tries to play a trick or two. Write “coyote stories” in your Venn diagram on the board. Tell the students that these stories are very popular, because Coyote is a very interesting character: while he is one of the Spirit People who understands the rules and ways of the Native People, he often decides not to follow these traditional ways and has to suffer the consequences. Most of these stories are humorous.

Explain to the students that it is a long story with a lot of repetition, but once the story begins, the students must be silent until the story is completed. The beginning of a story opens with the invocation: “*uknîi*,” which is pronounced something like “oohk-nee” and translates to something like, “and this is how it is.” The key word that signals the end of the story is “*kupánnakanakana*,” which is pronounced something like “cooPANakahnakahna” and translates to something like, “and that is how it was.”

Listening Comprehension: Read the excerpt of the *Coyote Trades His Song*. You may find a sound file with the original Karuk version, and another to aid with the singing portion in the Sípnuuk Digital Library, Archives and Museum. Contact the Karuk Department of Natural Resources for current address to link.

Ask the students what lessons, values and beliefs the story reveals (lessons in geography – upriver, downriver, Klamath Lakes; lessons in values - respect given to storytellers, the high value given to Karuk stories by not interrupting, and the consequences of disrespecting; gifts given to you; beliefs – that animals and humans once spoke to one another, and that intellectual property, such as a song – can be given and taken away).

What cultural knowledge and skills does the story teach? (The story teaches us to listen for songs in your heart and to sing when travelling. This is very typical for Karuk people, for the story infers the strong belief that songs can protect us when we travel outside of our homeland, and that by being given a song by someone from that foreign place will offer some protection as it will be recognized by the indigenous people. By giving someone your song, one you have made up yourself, you show goodwill. The story also teaches that the *ikxaréeyav* – Spirit People or the First Beings – give you songs if you listen for them, but no matter how often you sing them to yourself, they can be easily forgotten.)

Assign students comprehension questions.

Vocabulary: Project vocabulary for story analysis for class to see and explain these concepts in preparation for a class discussion. Other options would be to print out vocabulary and

² sound files located at <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~karuk>

questions below for homework or group work. Facilitate a discussion analyzing this story.

Possible prompts:

- Who is the protagonist? Is there an antagonist? [Coyote’s character is often both]
- How would you explain the plot of this story?
- How would you describe the character role of the singer?
- What part do the singer’s fellow travelers play?
- Where is the setting for this story?
- How is this story similar or different from other Oral Traditions? [Venn diagram]
- What can we infer about the Karuk tradition of song?
- How can this story shape our behavior?

Independent Work: Assign students **Cause/Effect Worksheet** included in this lesson.

Art Activity: Drawing exercise. Divide the class into groups or have them work alone and choose one of the following exercises to “draw” the story. After they are finished, have the students give a brief explanation of their maps or pictures and how it tells the story.

- Have students draw a story map. Suggested elements: Klamath river up to Klamath Lakes, singer and coyote, resting place where they visit, place where Coyote throws away the song, etc.
- Students can choose one part of the story to represent.
- After discussing the plot, assign students one aspect of the story to draw.

Optional:

- Engage the students in a search for local American Indian stories. Students may obtain family stories, research a story at the library, or search the Internet.
- Students create a play. Identify the main characters. Outline the order of events. Create dialog, perhaps with a storyteller, Coyote, the singer and the members of his traveling party. Have the students present their play to their classmates, or another class.
- Invite an Elder or other Cultural Practitioner to tell a story and/or sing a song.
- Invite speaker to teach Karuk formulaic language, such as the invocation and closing, and the final prayer used traditionally in stories like this.
- Have students try to find their own songs in their free time – perhaps while walking or at recess - and let them perform them to the class if they would like.

Evaluation:

- Evaluate the students’ discussion participation.
- Assess students’ respect for the similarities and differences between various ways of life, beliefs and oral traditions.
- Assess students’ ability to use the story analysis vocabulary to discuss the story.

- Assess the students' ability to retell the traditional Coyote story through plot summary and/or through explaining their visual map story depiction.

Resources:

Karuk Literature:

<http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~karuk/links.php>

Karok Myths, A.L. Kroeber and E.W. Gifford, University of California Press 1980

Sípnuuk Digital Library, Archives and Museum: for current link to address, contact Project Coordinator at the Karuk Department of Natural Resources, lisahillman@karuk.us

Literature Analysis:

<http://www.learner.org/interactives/story/characters.html> [geared to children]

[http://www.roanestate.edu/owl/elements.html](http://www.roanestate.edu/owl/elements/elements.html)

Karuk Vocabulary:

ishkêesh - Klamath River

uknii - uknîi - once upon a time (used to begin stories)

kupánakanakana - a word used to signal "the end"

panámniik / panamnih- a placename, Orleans

sâamay - a placename, Seiad

athithúvuunupma - a placename, Happy Camp. *Literally:* 'hazel-creek flowing-down-to'

kahtíshraam - a placename, Yreka, Shasta Valley

kahyúras - a placename, Klamath Lakes. *Literally:* 'upriver ocean.'

yoôtva – hurray! Also used in modern times to mean 'thank you.'

cháem – alright

chími - soon

Ikxaréeyav - Spirit Person

pihnêefich - coyote

Pihnêefich pamupákkuri upíraanva

Coyote Trades His Song

retold from Nettie Reuben's version translated and transcribed by Jim Ferrara

uknîi – and this is how it is:

One day, *pihnêefich* thinks to himself: “I’m going to go to Klamath Lakes (*kahyúras*).” And off he goes, walking far, far upriver. He walks and walks along the river, all the while getting more and more tired when all of a sudden, he hears something up the hill a ways: “What are they singing?” he wonders.

pihnêefich turns then and there and follows the sound: “My, how I like that song!” He can tell it is a male singer, and he starts to formulate a plan as he walks uphill toward the voice.

pihnêefich is an *ikxaréeyav*, or Spirit Person, and he knows the sacred ways of the Upriver People. And so he knows that he must give something or ask permission to learn and sing the song. His plan is to ask to trade for it, to trade one of his songs for the permission to use the song he is hearing and enjoying so much.

As he climbs the hill, he thinks what he can sing and a song comes to him:

*ánnu víhnaa, ánnu víih naaa,
eenáaya ánnu víh naa, ánnu víih naaa, iynáayaa.
ánnu víhnaa, ánnu víih naaa,
eenáaya ánnu víh naa, ánnu víih naaa, iynáayaa.*

He walks very far, and he listens again to the song up the hill: “Where are they singing? My, I do like that song!” He walks and walks and walks. And then he starts to sing again to himself:

*haninuvêe naa, haninuvêe naa,
eenáaya haninuvêe naa, haninuvêe naaa, iynáayaa.
haninuvêe naa, haninuvêe naa,*

eenáya haninuvêe naa, haninuvêe naaa, iynáayaa.

At last, he has gone so far that he decides to rest a bit: “Let me sit down here.” Coyote thinks that the singer must be from upriver; he must be coming down from upriver, he reasons, while I, on the other hand, am traveling upriver to Klamath Lakes (*kahyúras*). He sits down at a resting place and says to himself: “In a minute, he will show up – he must be close by.” And just then, *pihnêefich* hears the song again:

*kitâana kitâana íiyaa,
kitâana kitâana íiyaa.
kitâana kitâana íiyaa,
kitâana kitâana íiyaa.*

pihnêefich is smiling and listening closely when the singer appears: “Ooh, nephew, sit down –let’s rest!” says *Pihnêefich*. The singer looks at him and says, “*cháem* – alright!” And so they rest.

They first introduce themselves by explaining who their people are and where they come from, and then they chat for a long while. Then *pihnêefich* tells him, “I’d like to trade songs, nephew. I like your song a lot.” And the man agrees: “*chímmi!*”

pihnêefich asks then, “How does your song go? Sing!” And so the singer repeats:

*kitâana kitâana íiyaa,
kitâana kitâana íiyaa.
kitâana kitâana íiyaa,
kitâana kitâana íiyaa.*

pihnêefich thanks him – *yôotva, yôotva* – and he sings his song in return:

*haninuvêe naa, haninuvêe naa,
eenáya haninuvêe naa, haninuvêe naaa, iynáayaa.*

When he is finished, he says, “So that’s it, nephew. Thanks for trading!” He tells the group of the singer’s friends or relatives that have gathered there that he was heading upriver. “*cháem* – alright,” replies the singer, and he starts back down the hill headed downriver with the others.

pihnêefich turns back to his own journey upriver toward Klamath Lakes. He sings the song to himself as he walks:

*kitâana kitâana íiyaa,
kitâana kitâana íiyaa.
kitâana kitâana íiyaa,
kitâana kitâana íiyaa.*

He travels so far and sings the song so often that all at once, he stops and says: “I’m just so tired of this song! I’m tired of singing it – I’m going to throw it away!” And so he begins walking again and tries to recall his own song that he had traded for the new one. He thinks and thinks and thinks, but he can’t remember it. “*kitâana...*” he begins, but then he realizes that that was the wrong song. “That’s not it,” he cries. He tries again, and then he tries again but he just can’t remember. “*kitaana kitaana,*” he begins again, and then thinks, “‘*vishkitâan*’ maybe, ‘*vishkitâan*’ maybe...” He just can’t remember his song. He walks FAR upriver and wonders what he will do. They have taken away his song, he decides; he just can’t remember it anymore.

And so this is the way it was with *pihnêefich* when he walked to Klamath Lakes.

chéemyaach ík vúr ishyâat imshíihraavish.
And so you must shine upriver quickly, Spring Salmon.

vúra taneemchitátloo.
(My bones) just stick out of me.

nanivássih vúra veekiniyâachha.
My back has just become a perfect ridge.

nayávheeshik.
And so you must hurry back to me.

chéemyaach ík vúra ataychúkkínach í'uunúpraveesh.
Little Spring Brodiaea, you must sprout up quickly!

[Closing] *kupánnakanakana* – that is how it was.

Name _____

**Comprehension Questions: pihnêefich pamupákkuri upíraanva
Coyote Trades His Song**

1. Where does *pihnêefich* want to go?

2. Where does *pihnêefich* hear the song for the first time?

3. Why does *pihnêefich* call the singer his nephew?

4. How do they begin their conversation with each other?

5. With what does *pihnêefich* trade to receive permission to use the singer's song?

6. Why does *pihnêefich* say he is going to throw away the song after he gets it?

7. What happens next?

8. What do you think the prayer means that closes the story?

9. *pihnêefich*'s plan to get permission to sing the song is successful. Support this statement with details from the story.

10. Circle the answer choice or choices that explain why *pihnêefich* decides that they have taken his song from him.

- a. He can't remember it anymore.
- b. He was walking upriver when they were walking downriver.
- c. He was very dirty and needed a bath.
- d. He has traded his song for the new one and doesn't own it anymore.

Comprehension Questions - Key

pihnêefich pamupákkuri upíraanva
Coyote Trades His Song

1. Where does *pihnêefich* want to go?
He wants to walk to Klamath Lakes (kahyúras).
2. Where does *pihnêefich* hear the song for the first time?
He hears the song up the hill from where he was walking by the river.
3. Why does *pihnêefich* call the singer his nephew?
To call the stranger “nephew” is to show him respect and goodwill.
4. How do they begin their conversation with each other?
They begin their conversation with each other by explaining who they are (by telling who their people are) and where they are from.
5. With what does *pihnêefich* trade to receive permission to use the singer’s song?
Pihnêefich trades his own song to receive permission to use the singer’s song.
6. Why does *pihnêefich* say he is going to throw away the song after he gets it?
pihnêefich is tired of the song.
7. What happens next?
pihnêefich can’t remember his own song anymore.
8. What do you think the prayer means that closes the story?
[Allow for a variety of answers] The prayer closes stories, which are always told in the winter months. They pray for the return of the Spring Salmon

and the growth of the Injun potato, which are traditional food staples of the local tribes. The prayer is to show that the Karuk people will do what is right to relieve the hunger that plagues the people during the winter months. Some say that it can ward off hunchback. Explain that there is no real “right” answer.

9. *pihnêefich's plan to get permission to sing the song is successful. Support this statement with details from the story.*
pihnêefich is able to trade for the song because he shows good manners to the stranger by exchanging family and home information, chatting with him for a while, and waits until the right time to make his request. He then makes good on his offer and gives the stranger his own song to “pay” for the one he wants.
10. Circle the answer choice or choices that explain why *pihnêefich* decides that they have taken his song from him.
- a. He can't remember it anymore.
 - b. He was walking upriver when they were walking downriver.
 - c. He was very dirty and needed a bath.
 - d. He has traded his song for the new one and doesn't own it anymore.

Name _____

pihnêefich pamupákkuri upíraanva

Coyote Trades His Song

Cause and Effect

Think about what happens and why in the story. In each box write a cause or an effect from the story.

Cause (Why does it happen?)	→	Effect (What happens?)
<hr/> <hr/> <i>What does Coyote want?</i>	→	<i>pihnêefich</i> walks upriver.
<i>Pihnêefich</i> hears someone singing.	→	<hr/> <hr/> <i>Where does Coyote walk?</i>
<hr/> <hr/> <i>How does Coyote feel about the song?</i>	→	He decides to ask to trade his song for the song he hears.
<hr/> <hr/> <i>What does Coyote ask the singer?</i>	→	The singer trades songs with <i>pihnêefich</i> .
<i>pihnêefich</i> gets tired of the song.	→	<hr/> <hr/> <i>What does Coyote do with the song?</i>
Coyote thinks they have taken his song.	→	<hr/> <hr/> <i>What happened to the song?</i>

Pihnêefich pamupákkuri upíraanva

Coyote Trades His Song

Cause and Effect Answer Key

Cause (Why does it happen?)	→	Effect (What happens?)
<u><i>pihnêefich wants to go to Klamath Lakes.</i></u>	→	<i>pihnêefich</i> walks upriver.
<i>pihnêefich</i> hears someone singing.	→	<u><i>He walks up the hill.</i></u>
<u><i>He likes the song very much and wants to have it.</i></u>	→	He decides to ask to trade his song for the song he hears.
<u><i>pihnêefich asks the singer if he would trade songs.</i></u>	→	The singer trades songs with <i>pihnêefich</i> .
<i>pihnêefich</i> gets tired of the song.	→	<u><i>He throws away the new song (disrespects/stops singing it)</i></u>
<i>pihnêefich</i> thinks they have taken his song.	→	<u><i>pihnêefich can't remember his old song anymore.</i></u>

pihnêefich pamupákkuri upíraanva

Coyote Trades His Song

Story Analysis

To analyze a story helps us think about **how and why** it was told. It also helps us talk about a story. Here are some important vocabulary words that are often used in story analysis:

Plot – how the ideas or actions in the story are arranged.

Setting - the place or location of the action.

Character - a person, animal, or being that is doing something in the story.

- **Protagonist** - The character the story is about.
- **Antagonist** - A character or force that works against the protagonist.
- **Minor character** – Plays in the story, but not as important as the protagonist.
- **Static character** - A character that doesn't really do much in the story.