



ELA Common Core Content Standards:

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Reading Standards for Informational Text 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9

Writing Standards 3, 4

Speaking and Listening Standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6

Language Standards 1, 2, 3

Estimated duration: Two sessions; 1.5 hours each or more for art and writing activities

Goal: Students will relate the details of three creation stories by drawing a time line of the sequence of events, and compare the stories for similarities and differences

Teacher Background: Native Americans learn about their culture's lifeways through stories that have been passed orally through the generations. From these words we are able to understand our connection to each other and to the world, and learn how we should live and act. The stories remind us of the earlier time in our history when animals and humans talked to one another. They remind us that we are equals, we are related. Some stories retell our origins or how we came about to be. Traditional Karuk origin stories, like many other traditional Native American stories, are only told in the winter. In our area, this means that these stories are told when it is cold enough for snow to be in the high mountains. Although we can certainly allude to these stories, and often paraphrase them at other times of the year, the conditions for the representation of this kind of Karuk intellectual property do not allow for the use of the formulaic language that signal the opening (**Uknîi**), closing (**kupánnakanakana**), and prayers that frame their traditional rendition. Please respect this tribal code.

Some stories are told for fun, some teach us lessons about our fellow creatures and our environment, and some teach us how to conduct ourselves. Many of these stories have multiple objectives, and are tailored by the storyteller to fit the situation and goals. 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.

Throughout all these stories, we learn to make sense of our surroundings in many ways; one of which is the importance of our water resources to the survival of the people and their relations. Salmon and steelhead are vital to the Yurok, Hupa and Karuk people's food system. Tribal villages were situated near waterways, and their inhabitants often congregated to their fishing places during salmon runs. Fish are traditionally harvested with weirs, nets, and/or spears, and

the meat is preserved by smoking or drying. These stores help our subsistence-based people survive the winter. Salmon is considered a gift and held sacred.

The people that are now known as Hoopa Valley, Yurok, and Karuk tribal members perform “First Salmon” ceremonies before beginning their harvest. This involves recounting the oral traditions concerning the origins and travels of First Salmon. Thus honored, the salmon gives himself to the people for harvest. If First Salmon is properly treated, he acts as “leader” of the run, who should then follow and supply tribal peoples with abundant catch. Although the protagonist and some of the details in each story differ, the essence of these origin stories remains the same.

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.

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.

Theme/Big Idea: Stories shape our identity

Big Questions: How was the world created? Do different cultures have different beliefs about creation?

Materials:

Karuk: **How Coyote Freed Salmon for Mankind** (included)

Yurok: **Salmon Creation** (included)

Comprehension Worksheet: Karuk and Yurok (included)

Hupa: **How Salmon Came to Be** (included)

Comprehension Worksheet: Hupa (included)

Lesson Photos (included)

Art supplies (not included)

Preparation: Make copies of all three stories and comprehension works for each student.

Session 1.

Discussion: Open lesson with the question: Do you know that salmon are very important to the Hupa, Karuk and Yurok peoples? If the answer is yes, ask them how they know this. Let students

explore different avenues, such as “they like to eat this food,” “they talk about it on television,” “they go for the Salmon Run each year,” or “they say that salmon are their relations.”

If the answer is no, ask them how they would find out if this were true. Again, let students explore different ideas.

Unless this is already in discussion, remind students that Native Americans learn about their culture’s lifeways through stories that have been passed orally through the generations. A traditional Karuk origin story, like many other traditional Native American stories, is only told in the winter. In our area, this means that these stories are told when it is cold enough for snow to be in the high mountains. A society’s popular literature tells us a lot about what that culture values most. There are other ways we can discover what is important to a group of people: through popular music, for example. Ask students to think of some more expressions of popular culture.

Tell students that oral traditions, such as song, prayer and stories, are very important to Native peoples, for this is one of the ways they learn to understand their connection to each other and to the world, and learn how they should live and act. Some traditional Native American stories tell listeners about how they came to be, teach lessons about the environment, or teach how their society’s members should conduct themselves. Many stories have multiple objectives, and are tailored by the storyteller to fit the situation and goals. Ask students: if Coyote is one of the main characters, what sort of story do you expect to hear?

Tell students that the stories they will be learning are all creation stories, and all explain how salmon came to be. This is one way you can know that salmon hold an extremely high value among Hupa, Karuk and Yurok peoples.

Reading: Have student take turns reading aloud both **How Coyote Freed Salmon for Mankind** (Karuk) and **Salmon Creation** (Yurok) for the class.

Discussion: Prompt classroom discussion with the following: Who freed salmon? Who was hiding salmon? Where were the salmon hidden? Who was the protagonist? What tricks or secretive behaviors did the protagonist from each story employ to free the salmon?

Comprehension: Assign **Comprehension Worksheet: Karuk and Yurok** for in-class completion.

Art Activity: Have students decide on one of the two stories to illustrate. You may wish to split this activity into two parts, finishing in Session 2. Choose from one of the following art projects:

- Draw a comic strip sequence of events.
- Craft a paper collage of a particular scene or a sequence of events, using colored packing paper, glue, sequins, lesson photos (included), magazine pictures, etc.
- Build a three-dimensional box scene, using a card-board box.
- Painting or drawing a particular scene.

- Acting out in an impromptu play.

Session 2.

Activity: Divide class into four groups and have students sequence events for one of the stories they heard in Session 1 (two groups for each story). Then ask each group to elect a storyteller to tell their version to the class. Ask: Are the two versions of each story the same?

Tell students that this session's text is also an origin story about salmon. It's a Hupa story, and students should guess if this one will be very different or similar to the Karuk and Yurok stories.

Reading: Read aloud the Hupa story, **How Salmon Came to Be**.

Activity: Still in groups, assign one part of the story to each group. Students should choose a scribe to record a timeline of the story's events from the part of the story they have been given. Then, each group comes to the front of the class to retell their part of the story.

Discussion: Prompt discussion with: What are some common elements in the three stories? Why do you think these stories are similar, even though they are from different tribes?

Assign students **Comprehension Questions**.

Writing: Assign students a multiple-paragraph composition comparing and contrasting two of the three stories. Students should include details the stories have in common and details that differ between the stories. Students should conclude their composition with a paragraph that explains why they think these tribes share some common story elements

Karuk: How Coyote Freed Salmon for Mankind¹

adapted from the Karuk versions told by Georgia Orcutt in 1940 and Mamie Offield in 1957

Nobody had fish, for there were none in the river. After a while Coyote learned that two girls at **ameekyáaraam**² had some and they were hiding it. He thought for a long time about that and wondered: "How am I going to fix it? How can I get salmon for the people?" Then he had an idea. He took some alder bark and fixed it all nice so it looked like the backbone of a fish. Then he put deer marrow on it.

When he had fixed it up nice, he went up to **ameekyáaraam**. After arriving, he went to the house where the two **ikxaréeyav**³ sisters were living. He spoke to the girls as they were cooking acorns. Politely, they offered him some to eat. As they handed him his bowl of acorns, Coyote took his imitation fish out of his quiver and said: "I'm going to cook fish."

The girls wondered: "Where did he get fish? Nobody's got fish." They thought about this as they looked at each other. When Coyote cooked it, it appeared to have grease dripping from it. It was the deer marrow. He never offered them any to eat and pretended to eat it all himself.

Late in the evening the girls ate acorns without any fish. Being women, they had no sweathouse and so they had to let Coyote sleep by the fire in their house. Coyote just lay there, pretending to be asleep. He snored away, but watched and listened closely to them the whole time. After a while, one girl whispered, "I think he is asleep now." Then one said to her sister, "Let's cook!" She struck with her elbow against a wall-board on the uphill side of the house, and water and salmon flowed out. They cooked and ate it, all the while not knowing that Coyote was watching.

The next morning, they told him: "Go on now! We're going to pick acorns." But Coyote begged, "Let me go along!" They still refused, but he wheedled: "Do let me go along! I'll knock the acorns down." Now this offer they didn't refuse, for they could get many more acorns this way.

So they walked uphill to a large grove of tanoak trees and Coyote began beating the trees with a stick. Acorns flew everywhere: uphill, downhill, downriver, upriver. And while the girls were busy picking up the acorns, Coyote ran downhill to the women's house and tore out the wall-boards. Water and salmon streamed down the hill.

When the women returned to their house, they discovered the theft. "Oh!" they cried, "Coyote spoiled it. All right, let's go. Let's be transformed, for people are going to come into existence." And that's how Coyote freed the salmon and gave acorns to mankind.

¹ Kroeber, A.L. & Gifford, E.W. (1980). *Karok Myths*, University of California Press.
Bright, W. (1957). *The Karok Language. Karuk and English version on the Ararahih'urípih website*: http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~karuk/karuk-texts.php?text-id=WB_KL-17

² Karuk placename for an ancient village close to what is now known as Ike's Falls.

³ Karuk word for Spirit People.

Yurok: Salmon Creation⁴

adapted from the version told by Stone of Weitpus in 1902

It was at **Kenek**⁵ that they first made salmon. Two women lived there. There were no salmon in the world when **Wohpekuemew**⁶ came to them. He entered their house and made his greetings. Having a visitor, they showed their manners and asked him to stay for a meal. One of the women asked the other, "What shall we eat?" The other woman looked over to **Wohpekuemew** and told him, "Go up on the terrace."

Pretending to leave the house and wait for the meal on the terrace outside, he watched as she climbed up the short ladder to the upper ledge of the house floor. She was trying to conceal what she did, but he could see that she held a box with water and salmon inside. She took one of the fish out of the box, and the other woman helped her split it, put it on sticks, and broil it.

Wohpekuemew was still in the house. Then, **Wohpekuemew** made a big show of putting his hand into his travel bag and said, "I shall eat my salmon." They looked over and saw him pull out a large piece of what looked like dried salmon.

It was really alder bark, but the women were fooled and wondered: "Where did he get his salmon?" They were the only ones that owned salmon, and they had taken great pains to conceal them.

Wohpekuemew watched them closely, thinking: "Let me learn for certain whether it is they who keep salmon, for I have never seen this fish before."

NOW the women were more cautious: when they cooked their salmon, they put angelica root into its mouth before they set it by the fire so that they might not have bad luck. Then one said to the other: "Let us go out."

As soon as **Wohpekuemew** saw that he was alone in the house, he went hastily to where he had seen them take out the salmon. He found the box, tipped it over, and ran out. The water and the salmon flowed to the river. **Wohpekuemew** ran upstream while the two women pursued him. They were about to catch him when he saw two tan oak trees ahead. He ran towards them, crying: "Spread your branches over me! They're about to overtake me."

When he reached the trees, he jumped between and they closed their protective branches around him. The two women ran around and around the trees, but were unable to reach him.

⁴ Kroeber, A.L. (1979). Yurok Myths, University of California Press.

⁵ Yurok name for the big village at the center of their world. See Yurok Language Project website: <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~yurok/index.php>

⁶ Yurok name for a spirit person.

Name _____

Comprehension Worksheet: Salmon Origin Stories

Circle the correct answer to the following questions, whereby the first question refers to the story excerpts below:

How Coyote Freed Salmon for Mankind: As they handed him his bowl of acorns, Coyote took his imitation fish out of his quiver and said: "I'm going to cook fish."

Salmon Creation: Then, **Wohpekuemew** made a big show of putting his hand into his travel bag and said, "I shall eat my salmon."

1. What are these characters doing when they say these phrases?
 - a. **Wohpekuemew** and Coyote are pretending they have salmon.
 - b. **Wohpekuemew** and Coyote have salmon.
 - c. **Wohpekuemew** and Coyote are trying to impress the girls' mother.
 - d. **Wohpekuemew** and Coyote are pretending to have salmon, but really have eels.
2. In both stories, the main characters made imitation salmon out of what?
 - a. flattened eels
 - b. thin pieces of redwood
 - c. alder bark
 - d. sea weed
3. Which sentence from the Karuk story highlights how mankind was given salmon?
 - a. "...Let's be transformed, for people are going to come into existence."
 - b. He snored away, but watched and listened closely to them the whole time.
 - c. Then he put deer marrow on it.
 - d. And while the girls were busy picking up the acorns, Coyote ran downhill to the women's house and tore out the wall-boards.
4. By analyzing these stories, which elements can readers compare and contrast?
 - a. systems of tribal law and order
 - b. traditional family structures
 - c. character of main protagonist
 - d. cultural value placed on salmon

Hupa: How Salmon Came to Be⁷

adapted from the version told by Emma Lewis in 1901

When **Yimantuwiniai** came back to **Tcoxoltcwedin**, it occurred to him that there should be salmon. Someone had them shut up in the world across the ocean toward the north. It was a woman who guarded them. When **Yimantuwiniai** paid her a visit, he went into her home and spoke politely, addressing her as his niece. She gave him fresh salmon for his evening meal.

He spent the night there, and the next day he told her he would like some eels. When she went to catch them, he followed to spy upon her. After he discovered what he wished to know, he ran back and went into the sweathouse. The woman brought back the eels and dressed them. When she had them ready, she called to him to come in. He went into her house and ate the eels. After he had been there two nights, he was again hungry for salmon. When she went to get them, he followed to see what she would do and where she was going. He saw fishing boards projecting out over the water and many nets leaned up nearby. There were also nets for surf fish there. Then he came back to the house.

Next, he was hungry for surf fish. From a hiding spot, he watched her net them as she had done before. After she had pulled them out of the water, she cooked them for him between two sticks. Now he knew what to do. He made a flute and then went into the sweathouse to sweat. When he was done, he talked to the flute, telling it to play when he had gone out. That evening, he went and looked everywhere to see where the best place was to dig the outlet. He discovered that digging at one place would be easy.

He went back to the house and sharpened a stick. He told the flute to play and went out again, this time taking his quiver with him that he left on the roof. He went where the fish were. There in a pool were all kinds that live under water. Beginning at a certain spot he dug an outlet. When this ditch was finished, he let the water flow out. Carrying the fish with it, the water ran out and encircled the world.

He followed the stream to teach the people how to prepare the fish for food. When the woman discovered the theft, she ran along after the salmon that used to be hers, crying: "Wut-te wut-te, my salmon!" This was salmon's grandmother, a yellow breasted chat.

Yimantuwiniai walked and walked, and soon discovered that fish had already been eaten. He saw eels had been cut. "Not that way. You should cut them this way," he told the people, and he showed them how to cut them with a knife of white stone. At another place, he saw people that were cutting surf fish which had come ashore. "Not that way," he said. "You need to dry them this way," and he scattered them whole on the grass. Then he returned to **Tcoxoltcwedin**.

Salmon's grandmother walked all the way to Hupa following her fish. She still comes in the fifth month.

⁷ Goddard, P.E. (1904). *Life and Culture of the Hupa* American Archaeology and Ethnology, vol. 1, no. 1. University of California Press.

Name _____

Comprehension Questions: Hupa

Read this sentence from paragraph 3: *That evening, he went and looked everywhere to see where the best place was to dig the outlet.*

1. What is the meaning of the word “outlet,” as used in this sentence?
 - a. a place to trade or purchase fish
 - b. a passage or opening
 - c. a connection for some kind of power
 - d. a release for emotions
2. Which best summarizes paragraph 2 of the story?
 - a. **Yimantuwiniai** was hungry for eels and salmon.
 - b. **Yimantuwiniai** swims underwater to find salmon.
 - c. **Yimantuwiniai** spies on the woman when she goes to catch fish.
 - d. Surf fish make a tasty and filling meal for **Yimantuwiniai**.

Read this line from the story: *When the woman discovered the theft, she ran along after the salmon that used to be hers, crying: “Wut-te wut-te, my salmon!”*

3. This sentence refers to the fact that:
 - a. The woman was salmon’s grandmother who used to own the salmon.
 - b. **Yimantuwiniai** is a good spy.
 - c. The woman cooked salmon on a stick
 - d. Coyote likes to eat salmon.
4. Which sentence from the story shows that **Yimantuwiniai** freed the salmon?
 - a. There in a pool were all kinds that live under water.
 - b. Carrying the fish with it, the water ran out and encircled the world.
 - c. He made a flute and then went into the sweathouse to sweat.
 - d. After he discovered what he wished to know, he ran back and went into the sweathouse.

