



THE GOSHUTES

THE USE OF STORYTELLING IN THE TRANSMISSION OF GOSHUTE CULTURE

TEACHER BACKGROUND

The Goshutes now federally recognized as two separate bands, the Skull Valley Band of Goshutes and the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation have a long, rich oral tradition, and Goshute storytellers are highly respected members of their tribe for their role in transmitting knowledge. Several Goshute tales that have been passed down through generations include the character Coyote, a trickster figure that appears in the oral traditions of many western tribes. This lesson includes three Goshute Coyote stories: *Pia Toya*, *Coyote and Frog*, and “Coyote Eye-Juggler” Through these tales, students will see how Goshute storytellers use Coyote stories to perpetuate Goshute language, culture, and ties to place.

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to identify important elements of Goshute culture through their oral tradition.

TEACHER MATERIALS

At a Glance: Coyote Stories and Goshute Tradition

Coyote and Frog claymation video (available for download online at www.UtahIndians.org)

Pia Toya—A Goshute Indian Legend (excerpts available online at www.UtahIndians.org) or

“The Tale of Pia Toya” (included in Teacher Materials)

Photo of the Deep Creek Mountain Range

We Shall Remain: The Goshute (chapter 2, 07:20)

STUDENT MATERIALS

“Coyote Eye-Juggler”

Worksheet

TIME FRAME

Two thirty-minute periods over two days

PROCEDURE

Prior to the lesson, explain the difference between written history, which is what many students grew up with, and oral history, which is what the Goshutes and other indigenous peoples relied on to perpetuate knowledge (see “oral history” entry in Appendix A).

Read *Pia Toya—A Goshute Indian Legend* to the students. If you have access to the book, that is best. If not, you can make due with the excerpts on our website or the synopsis that is included in the teacher materials for this lesson. Pass out worksheets, and let students fill in the answers to the first set of questions. Talk through any questions they may have about Coyote and his “trickster” persona.



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PROCEDURE (CONT.)

Have students watch *Coyote and Frog* (available for download at www.UtahIndians.org). Have them answer the next questions on their worksheet. Discuss the differences between Coyote's behavior and Frog's behavior.

Give each student a copy of "Coyote Eye-Juggler." Have them read silently and answer the next set of questions on their own. Gather the class back together to discuss Coyote's behavior. Was it what they expected based on the first story? What lessons about behavior does this story teach? Can knowing the lessons hidden in the stories of a group of people tell us something about those people?

Discuss the Goshute lifestyle and why these stories would have been important and useful to the Goshutes. Have students finish the last set of questions on their worksheet.

ASSESSMENT / PRODUCTS

Discussion participation
Worksheet

VARIATIONS / EXTENSIONS

If you do not have internet access to download *Coyote and Frog*, just use *Pia Toya* and the oral history excerpt.

Give students an example of another value held by the Goshute people, and have them write a Coyote story that teaches that value. Some examples from *We Shall Remain: The Goshute* are respect for the land, meeting adversity with strength and determination, and respect for elders.

Hand each student a piece of drawing paper and crayons and have him/her draw their own version of the Deep Creek Mountain Range.

Have students tell someone at home a Coyote story and have them sign a paper proving that they are practicing storytelling skills.

Have students write their own stories about the creation of a local geographic feature and share it with their families. Students could create an illustration to accompany the story.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Defa, Dennis R. "The Goshute Indians of Utah." In *A History of Utah's American Indians*. Ed. Forrest S. Cuch. Salt Lake City: Utah Division of Indian Affairs and the Utah Division of State History, 2000.

Papanikolas, Zeese. *Trickster in the Land of Dreams*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.

Pia Toya – A Goshute Indian Legend: Retold and Illustrated by the Children and Teachers of the Ibabah Elementary School. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000.



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STANDARDS ADDRESSED

State Standards

Fourth Grade Social Studies – Utah Studies: 1/3/a&b; 2/1/c

Accreditation Competencies

Aesthetics/Understands and appreciates the intricacies and elegance of nature, the arts, and ideas/Understands how art helps to define a culture

NCSS Standards

Early Grades: 1/a,c&d; 5/b; 7/a; 8/a



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AT A GLANCE: COYOTE STORIES AND GOSHUTE TRADITION

Every culture has its own stories, and many cultures have a proper time and place for telling certain stories. For the Goshutes, storytelling was a winter activity; they believed it was dangerous to tell stories in the summer. This prohibition makes sense in the context of the Goshute lifestyle. In the other seasons, the Goshute people were busy with the work of food gathering and storing. They had more leisure time in the winter. Some Goshutes also attribute winter storytelling to the hibernation of snakes, which were disturbed by the telling of stories.

Storytelling was, and continues to be, an important method of cultural transmission for the Goshutes, and continues to be for the Skull Valley Band of Goshutes and the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation.

Historically, the Goshutes led highly mobile lifestyles to make the best use of their generally arid, desolate homeland. Because it was not practical to move works of art from place to place, they transmitted cultural values through stories.

Many Goshute stories feature Wolf and his younger brother Coyote. Wolf is a responsible brother and a force for good. Coyote is a trickster known for causing trouble. Sometimes Coyote's actions work out for the best in the end, but that cannot be counted upon. Coyote sets an example of what not to do, and many stories illustrate the consequences of "Coyote-like" behavior. Coyote can be trusted to keep the story interesting, and Goshute tales are frequently entertaining and humorous.

Just as Aesop's fables or Biblical parables were meant to make complex values lessons comprehensible to the masses, Coyote stories teach Goshute values without alienating the audience. In Pia Toya, Coyote tries to trick Mother Hawk to get what he wants, so he must feel her wrath. The Goshute people got a beautiful mountain range to remind them

of Mother Hawk's strength. The story of Coyote and Frog teaches that Coyote must "reap what he sows." "Coyote Eye-juggler" is more complex. In this story, Coyote plays with things he does not understand and loses his eyes in the process. He is tricked by the women and ends up at the bottom of the cliff literally licking his wounds. This story is a good example of the level of silliness and gore found in many Goshute tales. (Do not have students look up other stories on the internet, as they may not be age appropriate.) The humor and vivid imagery keep the attention of the listener and make the story memorable, which is important in oral tradition.

The connection to the Goshute homeland is obvious in the story Pia Toya. Pia Toya, or Ibapah Peak, is the highest peak in the Deep Creek Mountain Range, and these mountains have important meaning to the Goshute people, particularly to the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation who inhabit a reservation located at the base of the mountains. The waters that flow down through the mountains provide a crucial resource in the desert homeland of the Goshutes. Additionally, the Deep Creeks are home to many food and medicinal plants used by the Goshutes, such as pinyon pines, sego lilies, and elderberries. Many of the animals the Goshutes use for food—including rabbits, mountain sheep, antelope, and deer—can be found in the Deep Creek range as well.

The Deep Creek Mountains provided valuable natural resources; however, the environment of the Goshute homeland was primarily sparse desert. The challenging landscape meant that the Goshutes needed to be able to count on each other to survive, and a person who acted selfishly could endanger the livelihood of the whole group. Coyote is always looking out for himself, and he pays the price for his actions. Through Coyote stories the Goshutes



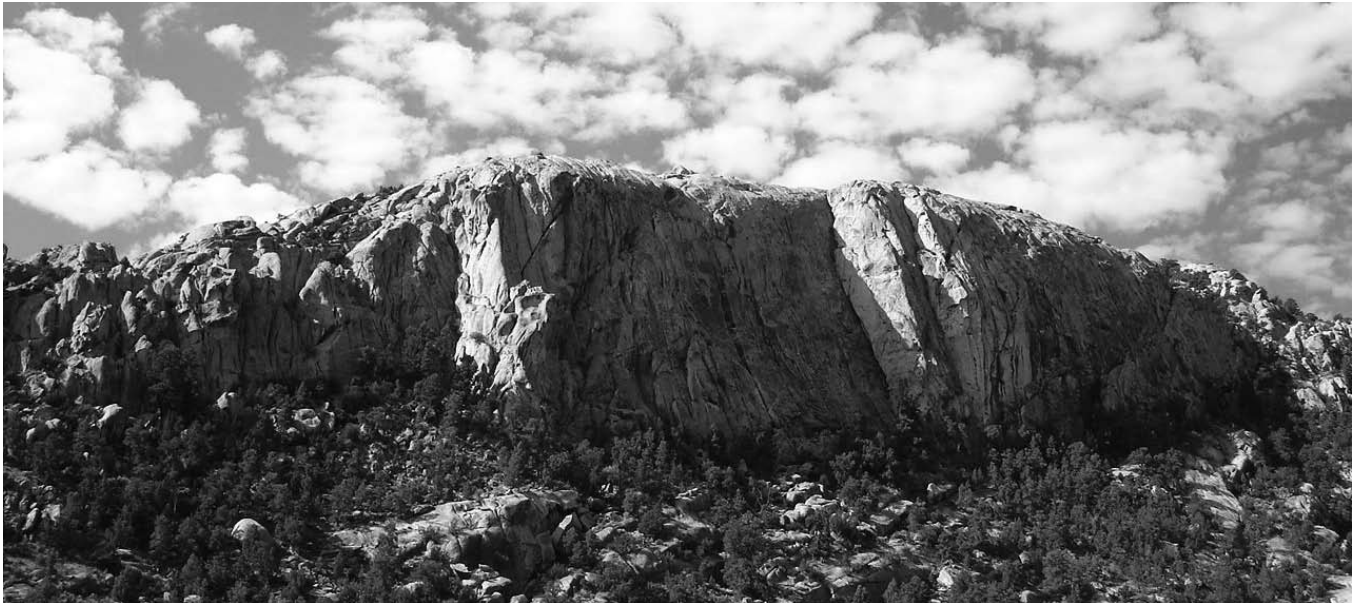
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reinforce the idea that each individual is responsible to the group. This lesson is not unique to the Goshutes—it can be found in the stories of many other cultures—but the Goshutes’ desert environment makes it all the more important. Individual Goshute families gathered plant foods, and the support of the family group was the first responsibility of any family member. Hunting was done in larger groups that met a few times throughout the year. Each individual involved in the hunt needed to trust and depend on everyone else in the hunt. Coyote’s selfishness would not be welcome in the family or the hunting group.

Today another crucial function of oral tradition is that it facilitates the preservation of the Goshute language, which in recent years has been in danger of being lost. Though the language is now being taught in elementary school on both the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation and the Skull Valley Band Goshute Reservation, the home has always been the primary place for teaching the Goshute language to young people. By passing down these stories, the Goshutes families transmit the language and the values of their people and preserve their culture for future generations.

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THE TALE OF PIA TOYA



Deep Creek Range

Long before there were people, there was a place called the Ibapah Valley. On one large mountain lived Coyote, but he did not have the whole mountain to himself. Mother Hawk had a nest in a tree high up on that mountain as well.

One morning Mother Hawk caught a small mouse. It would be her breakfast. Coyote saw Mother Hawk catch the mouse, and he thought it should be his breakfast. He decided to think of a way to turn Mother Hawk's breakfast into his breakfast. Spotting a rabbit hopping through the trees, he made his plan.

Coyote told Mother Hawk that she was so strong and graceful that she deserved the fat juicy rabbit for her breakfast. A powerful creature like Mother Hawk shouldn't be satisfied with a tiny mouse for breakfast, he continued. As Mother Hawk glanced up to see the rabbit, Coyote grabbed the mouse right out of her talons. Mother Hawk became powerfully angry.

Her mighty voice cried, "Return my breakfast you trickster."

Coyote argued back, "What if I don't?"

He quickly swallowed the small mouse. Mother Hawk flew high into sky beating her strong wings with all her might. From high above she watched that trickster Coyote. When he wasn't paying attention she swooped down on him. At the last moment Coyote saw her and jumped free from her attack. Mother Hawk's talons scraped the earth, gouging into the mountain that was their home.

Her anger only grew when she missed hitting Coyote. Up again she rose into the sky, and down again she dove for Coyote with her talons out. Once again Coyote jumped free at the last moment. Coyote wondered how long his luck would last; he wondered how long Mother Hawk's rage would last.



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A third time she rose high into the air, circling and gathering her power. She dove for Coyote again. Dust filled the air, mountains shook, trees bent, all from the powerful wind of Mother Hawk's wings. Coyote ran this way and that; still she kept coming for him.

After a long chase Mother Hawk's rage was exhausted. She landed in her tree to rest from the events of the morning. The wind storm from her wings blew out leaving a mountain of rubble greater than all the rest. The great mountain was called Pia Toya.

The peaks of Pia Toya are marked with the talon strikes of that angry morning. Mother Hawk will always have Pia Toya as a reminder of her power and strength. Coyote will always have Pia Toya as a reminder of his shameful behavior. And as the talon marks became the pathways for spring water and creeks, the Goshute people who call Ibabah their home will always have a source of water in the desert.

COYOTE EYE-JUGGLER

Long time ago Indian people told these stories to one another, I'm going to tell one now.

Long time ago my father and mother used to tell me stories.

That coyote was travelling, while he was travelling he stood under a willow tree, he heard noises like someone having fun. They were small gray sparrows, they were not waterbirds.

Them sparrows were taking out their eyes and tossing them in the air, their eyes would go into the air and return back to their own eye sockets.

They would talk to their eyes and tells it to come back to its owners.

Coyote stood under the willow tree and watched the sparrows having fun. Coyote liked what they were doing.

Coyote came to them and stood there watching them.

"What are you doing?" he said to them.

They answered Coyote and said, "We just take out our eyes and toss them in the air, then our eyes return to its own place when we lift up our heads."

Coyote said, "I want to try that myself," he said.

"Yes," they said to Coyote.

The sparrows were watching him, they stood all around him.

Then Coyote tried to take out his eyes but they would not come out.

Coyote was happy with what he did.

Then again he removed his eyes and he toss them up a little ways.

It took a little while before his eyes came back to him.

Again, Coyote tried again, he was having fun doing that.

Then Coyote toss his eyes way up high, he waited for his eyes to come back but it didn't.

His eyes got stuck way up high in the willow tree.

It is said today Coyotes eyes are still in the willow tree.

Coyote was blind not having eyes.

The little sparrows then were laughing at Coyote.

They left him there.

Then Coyote went from there.

Coyote being blind was just wandering around.

From somewhere two girls came and found Coyote.

At first before they found Coyote, they said, "Look, a good looking young man with bangs, his eyes tied over."

He was coming towards them then.

Then the two girls went with him and they stayed with Coyote.

They came to a shady place under a willow tree, the three arrived there.

And there under the willow tree Coyote laid down on the lap of one girl, his head on her lap, then he had his feet on the other girl's lap.

Then that one girl was picking out his head lice. They were picking out the lice he did not have any red nits.

Then Coyote said he didn't have any lice shaking his head from side to side, he wanted to impress the girls by saying that, also he liked their attention.

The girls then said, "From where is that bad smell coming from?"

Then they put him to sleep. Coyote then went into a deep hard sleep.

Coyote was sleeping in that same position on the girl's lap. Then the girls said, "Why is that wrap around his eyes?" They wanted to see his eyes they said.

Then they started to remove his eye wrap.

When they did that they could see fly maggots moving in his eye sockets.

The smell coming from his eye sockets were very nauseating.

Then they said, "What shall we do to Coyote?"

One girl said, "Go and get a dry willow tree log," she said to the other girl.

Then Coyote being in a deep sleep was not aware that a log was place under his head.

They also placed another log under his feet.

Itsappeh or Coyote was not aware of what was happening.

Then the two girls then left Coyote and walked away.

They did not like the way his eyes were stinking.

Later on Coyote woke up and told one girl to keep picking his nits from his head, he thought the girl was still there.

He raised his head up and thought he bumped the girl's leg but instead he bumped the log hard.

Then Coyote woke up, the girls were gone.

Coyote with his outstretched hands was running here and there for the girls.

And then, Coyote could not find them.

Coyote then being blind was following their scent, he kept following their scent, the direction they were going.

Then the girls were coming to a deep canyon. They could not cross the canyon and stopped there.

The girls then saw Coyote, he was catching up to them real fast.

Coyote was running by then.

One of the girls had a necklace that made loud noises.

Her friend said to the girl with the necklace to take it off and get ready to toss it into the canyon.

She said that to her friend.

Then Coyote was getting real close to them. They did not know what to do right then.

Then one girl said, "Throw the necklace down into the canyon and blow at it to help it along."

Coyote heard the ringing of that necklace and went flying off into the air into the canyon.

While falling he was hollering and singing like saying, "Poor me, what's happening?"

Coyote landed and made the yellow dust fly.

Coyote landed and broke his legs.

It might be said his leg bones were broken and exposing his marrow.

The two girls afterward were looking down into the canyon and saw that coyote had broken his legs.

Then with his forefinger was taking marrow and licking it there.

The girls said, "Look at Coyote, he is eating and licking his own marrow, that's what they said to him."

"You're eating your own flesh and licking it today thinking that it's alright."

"There's no way we could help," they said.

That was the last time they saw Coyote.

That is all.

GOSHUTE STORYTELLING WORKSHEET

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PIA TOYA QUESTIONS

1. How does Coyote try to get what he wants?
2. How did Hawk get what she wanted?
3. Is Coyote rewarded for his behavior?
4. Is Hawk respected for her behavior?
5. What is left to remind Coyote and everyone else to not try to trick people?

COYOTE AND FROG QUESTIONS

6. Who is the real trickster in this story?
7. Who thinks he is the trickster in this story?
8. Does Coyote learn his lesson?



“COYOTE EYE-JUGGLER” QUESTIONS

9. Should Coyote have tried the sparrow’s game?
10. What happened to him when he did?
11. How did the girls trick Coyote into thinking they were still there?
12. How did they trick Coyote into running off of the cliff?

GOSHUTE COYOTE STORY QUESTIONS

13. Circle all the words that you think could describe Goshute Coyote stories:
Funny, Scary, Silly, Gross, Helpful, Sad, or Romantic.
14. Why do you think the other animals and people get so excited to pull tricks on Coyote?
15. If someone in your family sat you down and told you a Coyote story, what would you think?
16. If a Goshute kid heard a Coyote story, what would he or she think?
17. If you wanted to be respected by the Goshute tribe, would you act like Coyote?
18. If you wanted to be respected by the Goshute tribe, would you act like Hawk?
19. If you wanted to be respected by the Goshute tribe, would you act like Frog?
20. Why do you think the Goshutes tell their children stories instead of making lists of rules to follow?