



Eagle Stories From Around the World

Time Needed:

45min to 1 hour

Ages:

2nd to 5th grade

Season:

Any

Materials: copies of the short stories, journals or notebook and writing utensils

Optional Materials: Books from additional reading list

Lesson Outline:

- I. Introduction – 10 min
- II. Read Stories – 20 min
- III. Journal – 10 min
- IV. Wrap-up – 5 min

Overview of Lesson: Students will read several legends or myths about eagles and then write about what they have read.

Minnesota English Language Arts Standards

2.1.2.2 Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

2.1.3.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

3.1.2.2 Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

4.1.9.9 Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures, **including American Indian.**

4.6.9.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

5.2.6.6 Analyze multiple accounts **by various cultures** of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

5.6.9.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Background Information

Universally seen as symbols of strength and majesty, eagles have earned their place in the myths and stories of many cultures. Around the globe and throughout history, many cultures legends have included eagles. Eagles are often considered a helpful messenger, delivering warnings of approaching trouble and aiding in humanity's survival.

The importance of eagles in many cultures can still be seen today. Various flags, emblems and seals of countries around the world have eagles represented on them. The bald eagle is the national symbol of the United States and the golden eagle is found on the flag of Mexico. Many countries have coins and stamps that feature eagles.

Vocabulary:

Moral: a lesson that can be derived from a story, a piece of information, or an experience.

Mythology: a collection of myths or stories, especially belonging to a particular religious or cultural tradition.

Prior to teaching:

Familiarize yourself with the eagle stories and symbols provided at the end of this lesson.

Lesson Outline:

- I. **Introduction to legends and mythology (10 minutes)**
 - a. Tell the students that eagle species are found worldwide. Across many cultures, eagles are highly respected and are the center of many legends or stories. Ask the students to brainstorm some reason why people might think so highly of eagles.
- II. **Choose 2-3 stories for students to read and journal about**
(20 minutes reading, and 10 minutes journaling).
Reading and journaling can be done individually, in small groups or with the whole class. After each story is read, give the students several minutes to answer questions or journal about the story.
 - a. Possible journal questions include:
 - i. What is the eagle's role in the story?
 - ii. What is the moral of the story?
 - iii. After the final story is read, have the students compare the stories in their journal. Are there any similarities in the eagle's role?
 - iv. What does the eagle mean to you?
 - v. Eagles are found all around us – where have you seen an eagle in your day to day life?
 - vi. If you could choose to be any animal what would you be and why?
- III. **Conclusions (5 minutes)** – Have the students discuss their answers to the journal questions in small groups.

Extensions:

Have students research a myth of their choosing and share it with a class or in their journal. The same journal questions as above may be used.

Additional myth and storybooks:

- *Aesops Fables* - Aesop's Fables or the *Aesopica* is a collection of fables credited to Aesop, a slave and storyteller believed to have lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 560 BCE. The stories associated with Aesop's name have descended to modern times through a number of sources. One translation is by Laura Gibbs, Oxford World's Classics (2008)
- *Native American Animal Stories* by Joseph Bruchac
- *Native American Stories* by Michael Caduto
- *Earth Tales From Around the World* by Michael Caduto and Adelaide Murphy Tyrol

A Central African Tale

It was not often that the tortoise and the eagle met, for the one spent his days in the clouds and the other under a bush. However, when the eagle heard what a warm-hearted little fellow the tortoise was, he went to pay a call on him. The tortoise family showed such pleasure in his company and fed him so lavishly that the eagle returned again and again, while every time as he flew away he laughed, "Ha, ha! I can enjoy the hospitality of the tortoise on the ground but he can never reach my eyrie in the tree-top!"

The eagle's frequent visits, his selfishness and ingratitude became the talk of the forest animals. One day a frog called from the stream bank, "Friend tortoise, give me beans and I will give you wisdom." After enjoying the bowl of beans the frog said, "Friend tortoise, the eagle is abusing your kindness, for after every visit he flies away laughing, 'Ha ha! I can enjoy the hospitality of the tortoise on the ground but he can never enjoy mine, for my eyrie is in the tree-tops.' Next time the eagle visits you, say, 'Give me a gourd, and I will send food to your wife and children too'."

The eagle brought a gourd, enjoyed a feast, and as he left he called back, "I will call later for the present for my wife."

The eagle flew away laughing to himself as usual, "Ha ha! I have enjoyed the tortoise's food, but he can never come to my eyrie for a taste of mine."

The frog arrived and said, "Now, tortoise, get into the gourd. Your wife will cover you over with fresh food and the eagle will carry you to his home in the treetops."

Presently the eagle returned. The tortoise's wife told him, "My husband is away but he left this gourd filled with food for your family."

The eagle flew away with the gourd, little suspecting that the tortoise was inside. The tortoise could hear every word as he laughed, "Ha! ha! I share the tortoise's food but he can never visit my eyrie to share mine."

As the gourd was emptied out onto the eagle's eyrie, the tortoise crawled from it and said, "Friend eagle, you have so often visited my home that I thought it would be nice to enjoy the hospitality of yours."

The eagle was furious. "I will peck the flesh from your bones," he said. But he only hurt his beak against the tortoise's hard back.

"I see what sort of friendship you offer me," said the tortoise, "when you threaten to tear me limb from limb. Under the circumstances, please take me home, for our pact of friendship is at an end."

"Take you home, indeed!" shrieked the eagle. "I will fling you to the ground and you will be smashed to bits in your fall." The tortoise bit hold of the eagle's leg. "Let me go, let go of my leg, let go of my leg," groaned the great bird.

"I will gladly do so when you set me down at my own home," said the tortoise, and he tightened his hold on the eagle's leg. The eagle flew high into the clouds and darted down with the speed of an arrow. He shook his leg. He turned and twirled, but it was to no purpose. He could not rid himself of the tortoise until he set him down safely in his own home.

As the eagle flew away the tortoise called after him, "Friendship requires the contribution of two parties. I welcome you and you welcome me. Since, however, you have chosen to make a mockery of it, laughing at me for my hospitality, you need not call again."

Eagle Boy – Zuni Tribe (southwest United States)

Long ago, a boy was out walking one day when he found a young eagle that had fallen from its nest. He picked that eagle up and brought it home and began to care for it. He made a place for it to stay, and each day he went out and hunted for rabbits and other small game to feed it. His mother asked him why he no longer came to work in the fields and help his family.

"I must hunt for this eagle," the boy said. So it went on for a long time and the eagle grew large and strong as the boy hunted and fed it. Now it was large and strong enough to fly away if it wished to. But the eagle, stayed with the boy who had cared for it so well. The boy's brothers criticized him for not doing his share of work in the corn and melon fields, but Eagle boy as they now called him did not hear them. He cared only for his bird. Even the boy's father, who was an important man in the village, began to scold him for not helping. But still the boy did not listen.

So it was that the boy's brothers and his older male relatives in his family came together and decided that they must kill the eagle. They decided to do so when they returned from the fields the following day. When Eagle Boy came to his bird's cage, he saw that the bird sat there with its head hanging down. He placed a rabbit he had caught in the cage, but the eagle did not move or eat it. "What is wrong, my eagle friend?" asked the boy.

Then the eagle spoke, he had never spoken to the boy before. "My friend, I cannot eat for I am filled with sadness and sorrow. It is because of you. You have not done your work in the fields. Instead, you have spent all of your time caring for me. Now your brothers and family have decided to kill me so that you again will return to your duties in the village. I have stayed here all of this time because I have learned to love you. But now I must leave. When the sun rises tomorrow, I will fly away and never come back."

"My eagle," said the boy, "I do not want to stay here without you. You must take me with you."

"My friend, I cannot take you with me," You would not be able to find your way through the sky. You would not be able to eat raw food." said the eagle. "If you are certain, then you may come with me. But you must do as I say. Come to me at dawn, after the people have gone down to their fields. Bring food to eat on our long journey across the sky. Put food in pouches so you can sling them over your shoulders. You must also bring two strings of bells and tie them to my feet."

That night the boy filled the pouches with blue corn wafer bread, dried meats and fruits. He made up two strings of bells, tying them with strong rawhide. The next morning, after the people had gone down to the fields, he went to the eagle's cage and opened it. The eagle spread its wings wide. "Now," he said to Eagle Boy, "tie the bells to my feet and then climb onto my back and hold onto the base of my wings." Eagle Boy climbed on and the eagle began to fly. It rose higher and higher in slow circles above the village and above the fields.

"They are leaving." Eagle Boy's parents yelled up to him, but he could not hear them. The eagle and boy went higher and higher in the sky until they were only a tiny speck and they disappeared from the sight of the village people. The eagle and the boy flew higher and higher until they came to an opening in the clouds. They passed through and came out into the Sky Land.

They landed there on Turquoise Mountain where the Eagle People lived. Eagle Boy looked around the sky world. Everything was smooth and white and clean clouds. "Here is my home," the eagle said. He took the boy into the city in the sky, and there were eagles all around them. They looked like people, for they took off their wings and their clothing of feathers when they were in their homes.

The Eagle People made a coat of feathers for the boy and taught him to wear it and to fly. It took him a long time to learn, but soon he was able to circle high above the land just like the Eagle People

and he was an eagle himself. "You may fly anywhere," the old eagles told him, " anywhere except to the South. Never fly to the South Land."

All went well for Eagle Boy in his new life. One day, though, as he flew alone, he wondered what it was that was so terrible about the South. His curiosity grew, and he flew further and further toward the South. Lower and lower he flew and now he saw a beautiful city below with people dancing around red fires. "There is nothing to fear here," he said to himself, and flew lower still. Closer and closer he came, drawn by the red fires, until he landed. The people greeted him and drew him into the circle. He danced with them all night and then, when he grew tired, they gave him a place to sleep. When he woke the next morning and looked around, he saw the fires were gone. The houses no longer seemed bright and beautiful All around him there was dust, and in the dust there were bones. He looked for his cloak of eagle feathers, wanting to fly away from this city of the dead., but it was nowhere to be found. Then the bones rose up from the dust and came together. There were people made of bones all around him! He stood up and began to ran away from them. The people made of bones chased him. Just as they were about to catch him, he saw a badger.

"Grandson," the badger said, "I will save you." Then the badger carried the boy down into his hole and the bone people could not follow. "You have been foolish," the badger scolded. "You did not listen to the warnings the eagles gave you. Now that you have been in this land in the South, they will not allow you to live with them anymore."

Then the badger took pity on Eagle Boy and showed him the way back to the city of the eagles. It was a long hard journey and when the boy reached the eagle city, he stood outside the high white walls. The eagles would not let him enter. "You have been to the South Land," they said. "You can no longer live with us." At last, the eagle the boy had raised below took pity on him.

After all, this boy had feed and cared for him. He brought the boy an old and ragged feather cloak. "With this cloak you may reach the home of your own people," he said. "But you can never return to our place in the sky."

He gratefully accepted the gift of the tattered feather cloak. His flight back down to his people was a hard one, more difficult than any flights in Sky Land. He almost fell through the sky many times. His eagle friend circled and circled in the clouds watching over him. When he finally reached the village of his people on earth, the eagle flew down and carried off the feather cloak they had given him.

From that time on, Eagle Boy lived among his people. Though he lifted his eyes in joy whenever eagles soared overhead, he shared in the work in the fields, and his people were honored and happy to him among them. He could fly away if it wished to, but he the eagle stayed with the people who loved him.



Creation legend of the Lakota (a plains tribe of North America)

A long time ago, a really long time when the world was still freshly made, Unktehi the water monster fought the people and caused a great flood. Perhaps the Great Spirit, Wakan Tanka, was angry with us for some reason. Maybe he let Unktehi win out because he wanted to make a better kind of human being.

Well, the waters got higher and higher. Finally everything was flooded except the hill next to the place where the sacred red pipestone quarry lies today. The people climbed up there to save themselves, but it was no use. The water swept over that hill. Waves tumbled the rocks and pinnacles, smashing them down on the people. Everyone was killed, and all the blood jelled, making one big pool.

The blood turned to pipestone and created the pipestone quarry, the grave of those ancient ones. That's why the pipe, made of that red rock, is so sacred to us. Its red bowl is the flesh and blood of our ancestors, its stem is the backbone of those people long dead, the smoke rising from it is their breath. I tell you, that pipe, that *chanunpa*, comes alive when used in a ceremony; you can feel power flowing from it.

Unktehi, the big water monster, was also turned to stone. Maybe Tunkshila, the Grandfather Spirit, punished her for making the flood. Her bones are in the Badlands now. Her back forms a long high ridge, and you can see her vertebrae sticking out in a great row of red and yellow rocks. I have seen them. It scared me when I was on that ridge, for I felt Unktehi. She was moving beneath me, wanting to topple me.

Well, when all the people were killed so many generations ago, one girl survived, a beautiful girl. It happened this way: When the water swept over the hill where they tried to seek refuge, a big spotted eagle, Wanblee Galeshka, swept down and let her grab hold of his feet. With her hanging on, he flew to the top of a tall tree which stood on the highest stone pinnacle in the Black Hills. That was the eagle's home. It became the only spot not covered with water.

If the people had gotten up there, they would have survived, but it was a needle-like rock as smooth and steep as the skyscrapers you got now in the big cities. My grandfather told me that maybe the rock was not in the Black Hills; maybe it was the Devil's Tower, as white men call it, that place in Wyoming.

Both places are sacred. Wanblee kept that beautiful girl with him and made her his wife. There was a closer connection then between people and animals, so he could do it. The eagle's wife became pregnant and bore him twins, a boy and a girl. She was happy, and said: "Now we will have people again. *Washtay*, it is good."

The children were born right there, on top of that cliff. When the waters finally subsided, Wanblee helped the children and their mother down from his rock and put them on the earth, telling them: Be a nation, become a great Nation – the Lakota Oyate."

The boy and girl grew up. He was the only man on earth, she the only woman of child-bearing age. They married; they had children. A nation was born.

So we are descended from the eagle. We are an eagle nation. That is good, something to be proud of, because the eagle is the wisest of birds. He is the Great Spirit's messenger; he is a great warrior. That is why we always wore the eagle plume, and still wear it. We are a great nation. It is I, Lame Deer, who said this.

Athapaskan eagle story

Athapaskans are a tribe found in the northwest coast of North America.

This story portrays eagles as the deliverers of people from famine.

A prince who gave an eagle a salmon during time of plenty was repaid in the lean year that followed by grateful eagles who first dragged salmon, then sea lions, and eventually whales to shore in gratitude for the prince's kindness. Such legends were probably inspired by the sight of eagle parents carrying food to their nests.



Greek Mythology

Zeus was the god in control of weather who resided on top of Mount Olympus. The eagle was said to be Zeus's only companion on the mountain and is often pictured delivering lightning bolts. Today, the eagle considered the bird of Zeus and is depicted on Greek coins.



Eagle and the Hen

Once upon a time, at a large mountainside there was an eagle nest with 4 large eagle eggs inside. One day, a farmer was out walking when he saw the nest. He knew he shouldn't but he grabbed an egg out of the nest and took it home. Back at the farm, the farmer put the eagle egg in with his chickens.

The chickens knew that they must protect the eagle egg. Eventually, the eagle egg hatched and a beautiful eagle was born. Being chickens, the chickens raised the eagle to be a chicken. The eagle loved his home and family but it seemed his spirit cried out for more.

One day, the eagle looked to the skies above and noticed a group of mighty eagles soaring. "Oh," the eagle cried, "I wish I could soar like those birds."

The chickens roared with laughter, "You cannot soar like those. You are a chicken and chickens do not soar." The eagle continued staring at his real family up above, dreaming that he could be like them. *Each time the eagle talked about his dreams, he was told it couldn't be done.*

That was what the eagle learned to believe. After time, the eagle stopped dreaming and continued to live his life as a chicken. Finally, after a long life as a chicken, the eagle passed away.

Moral: You become what you believe you are. If you ever dream to become an eagle, follow your dreams, not the words of chickens.



Eagle and the Crow

An Eagle, swooping down on powerful wings, seized a lamb in her talons and made off with it to her nest. A crow saw the deed, and his silly head was filled with the idea that he was big and strong enough to do as the Eagle had done.

So with much rustling of feathers and a fierce air, he came down swiftly on the back of a large Ram. But when he tried to rise again he found that he could not get away, for his claws were tangled in the wool. And so far was he from carrying away the Ram, that the Ram hardly noticed he was there.

The Shepherd saw the fluttering crow and at once guessed what had happened. Running up, he caught the bird and clipped its wings. That evening he gave the crow to his children.

"What a funny bird this is!" they said laughing, "what do you call it, father?"

"That is a crow, my children. But if you should ask him, *he* would say he is an Eagle."

Do not let your vanity make you overestimate your powers.



THE EAGLE AND THE FARMER

(from Aesop's Fables, translated by Laura Gibbs)

An eagle was caught by a farmer but the farmer let him go when he realized what he had caught.

The eagle did not forget this good deed, and when he saw the farmer sitting under a wall that was on the verge of collapsing, he snatched the bandana from the man's head, wanting to rouse the man from his seat and make him stand up.

After the man set off in pursuit, the kindly eagle dropped what he had snatched and thus fully repaid the man's good deed: the man would have been crushed by the wall's collapse if he had stayed there any longer. After a while the man came back to where he had been sitting and found that the upright section of the wall had fallen to the ground.

This fable shows that if anyone does you a favor you must repay them in kind.



A Kwakiutl eagle story

(The Kwakiutl tribe is found in British Columbia along the northwest coast of North America.)

Legend has it that the eagle once had very poor eyesight. Because it could fly to the highest treetops, however; a chief asked the eagle to watch for invading canoes. Anxious to assist, the eagle convinced the slug, which in those days had excellent vision, to trade eyes temporarily.

The slug agreed, but when the eagle's sentinel duties were finished, the eagle refused to trade back eyes. Thus, goes the legend, not only is the eagle's sharp vision accounted for, but also the slowness of the slug.



How Did Crow's Feathers Become Black In Australian Aboriginal Mythology and Why Was Eagle Suspicious of Crow?

During The Dreamtime, Crow's feathers were white. One morning, Crow told his best friend Eagle to go hunting in the hills for kangaroo .Crow said that he would search along the lake for ducks. The two friends promised to share whatever they had caught with the other when they returned from the hunt.

Eagle spent all day searching for kangaroo but could not find any.

Crow, in the meantime, dove into a lake and hid underwater. He took a hollow reed and poked it above the pond's surface so he could breathe. Soon, unsuspecting ducks began swimming by. Crow grabbed and pulled them under. When he had enough, he left the pond and cooked the birds over a fire. Then Crow returned to camp and told Eagle that he had had no success.

Each day, Crow told Eagle to fly to the hills in search of kangaroo and he went hunting for more ducks.

Finally, Eagle grew suspicious, and one day he returned to the camp earlier than usual. As he approached, Eagle saw Crow frantically hiding the cooked duck under some leaves. As he got closer, Eagle spied grease on the fire's ashes and around Crow's mouth.

Realizing that Crow had been lying to him all this time, Eagle grabbed Crow and threw him into the ashes. Whenever Crow jumped up, Eagle pounced and thrust him back until Crow's feathers were colored black, as they are to this day.

