

# Native American Mythology and Legends

How does Native American culture influence their legends?

# What is Mythology?



- Mythology explains what happens around us in the World
  - What is the sun?
  - Why does it rise and set?
  - What is the wind?
  - How did people get to Earth?
- Myths or legends are stories

# A Myth: Why Men Has Fire

When the earth was young, Fire was owned by Bear. Bear carried fire with him wherever he went. When it was cold, Fire kept Bear and his family warm. When it was dark, Fire lit the way.

One day, Bear and his family arrived at a forest. Bear put Fire down at the edge of the forest while he and his family went to explore.

Soon Bear found that this forest had the best acorns he had ever tasted. Bear and his family moved deeper into the forest to find more acorns. They ate and ate and didn't stop. At the same time, Fire was running out of wood. Fire cried out to Bear "Come back and feed me!", but Bear was too far into the woods.



# A Myth: Why Men Has Fire

Just then Man came along. He asked Fire if he could help. Fire told him to bring him wood and sticks. Man placed sticks on Fire and soon Fire was blazing again, happy to have plenty of wood to burn. Man enjoyed Fire's light and warmth. They were happy together. When Bear finally returned, Fire drove him away and now Fire belongs only to Man.





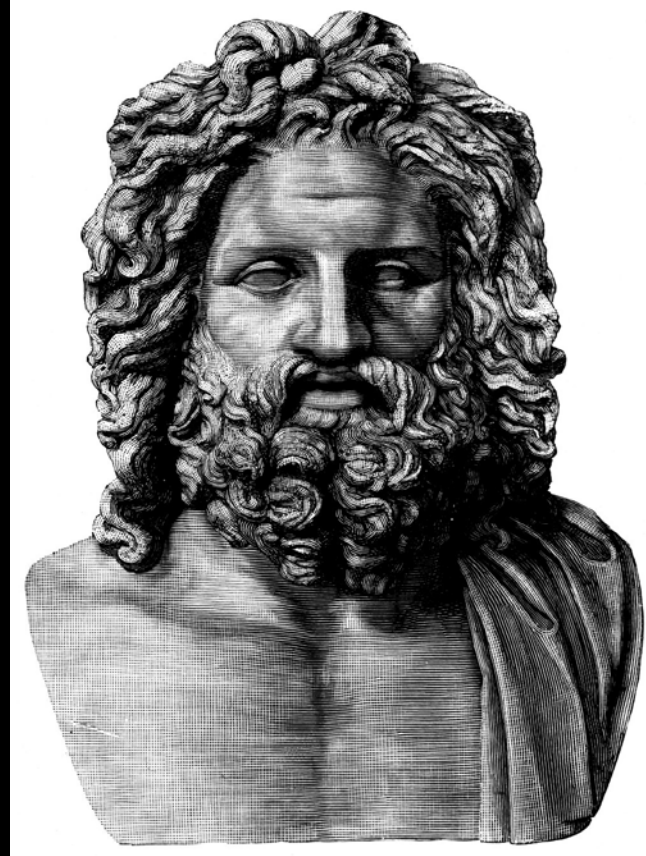
# Greek Myths vs. Native American Myths

## HOW WAS EARTH CREATED?

The GREEKS believed:

- At first, only Chaos
- Gaea (Earth), Tartarus (Underworld), and Eros (Love).
- Twelve Titans and Three Cyclops.
- Later, came Zeus and the other Gods

These beings were mostly people and born much like how people are born. Heroes were Gods.



ZEUS



# Greek Myths vs. Native American Myths

## HOW WAS EARTH CREATED?

The NATIVE AMERICANS believed:

- Different Tribes = Different Legends
- Great Spirit or Creator, Mother Earth (woman)
- First Heroes in Legends: animals
  - Coyote, Raven, Wolf

GET READY TO PAIR  
SHARE!



COYOTE

# PAIR SHARE

What is one similarity between  
Greek and Native American  
mythology?

# PAIR SHARE

What is one difference between  
Greek and Native American  
mythology?



# Native American Culture (western states)

## Copy the terms in your Glossary

- **Shaman:**
  - A person who could speak with the spirits and make prophecies
- **Medicine Man/Woman:**
  - A person who could heal others, usually with magical powers or help from spirits. Often a leader among tribes.
- **Buckskin:**
  - Soft leather, usually from a deer, elk, or buffalo, that was often used for clothing
- **Dream Vision:**
  - Communication with a person from a spiritual being, a sign of growing up



# The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush



# PAIR SHARE

What is one thing that you **LIKED**  
about the story?

# PAIR SHARE

What is something else that you wonder about the story?



# Inuit Culture (Alaska)

## Copy the terms in your Glossary

- **Tundra:**
  - A large, treeless region where the ground is permanently frozen
- **Igloo:**
  - Inuit word for: Home
  - Houses made from snow and ice
- **Harpoon:**
  - A barbed spear attached to a rope that was thrown into the water to kill large animals like whales
- **Animal Hide:**
  - The skin of animals used for clothing. Inuits used polar bears, foxes, or seals



# The Legend of the Northern Lights



# PAIR SHARE

What is one thing that you **LIKED**  
about the story?

# PAIR SHARE

What is something else that you wonder about the story?



# PAIR SHARE

Name one thing that a Native American myth or legend explains about the world.

# VOCABULARY FOCUS

Next to each definition in your glossary, draw a quick sketch of each word to help you remember!