

CATEGORY: BRAZIL: INDIGENOUS CULTURES

CONCEPTS: FOLKLORE, religion, race/ethnicity

ACTIVITY: A ^AGE INDIAN CREATION MYTH. This creation myth has elements in common with creation stories all over the world. It is a good introduction to the shared elements in world folklore. In the Peruvian section there is an Inca creation myth which should be read and compared along with this tale.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be introduced to the idea of creation myth and discuss how and why these seem so similar across the world.

MATERIALS: Copies of the reading (unless you decide to read it orally),
Map of Brazil

PROCEDURE: Read and discuss the creation myth: Be sure to locate the ^AGE area on a map.

1. What is a creation myth?
2. How does this myth show similarities with other creation myths? (flood, lost "paradise," humans created from other objects, etc.)
3. Can you think of reasons this might occur? (A real flood, melting glaciers, common human need to explain other people, etc.)

VOCABULARY: creation myth

RELATED ACTIVITIES: The school or public library should have ample examples of creation myths from all over the world: Africa, Asia, the North American Indian groups etc. As homework or for extra credit students can narrate these tales in class and lead a discussion on how they differ with or are similar to tales they now know.



LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES

Source: Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades*. Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985.

The Creation of Human Beings
A Gê Indian Creation Myth

In the beginning of time only two beings existed on earth. They were Mebapame (the sun) and Bruburé (the moon). They lived all by themselves, hunting and preparing their own food.

They felt lonely, so one day they decided to create some people. They prepared a field and in it they planted gourds. Every day they checked on the plants. When the first fruits appeared, Bruburé was anxious to pick them right away. Mebapame, however, stopped him, saying: "Don't be so impatient. They aren't ripe yet!"

Finally the gourds were ready. Mebapame and Bruburé picked them all and took them to the banks of the Tocantins River. There, they had already built a village. One by one, they threw the gourds into the river. The first gourd, thrown by Mebapame, touched the water and immediately turned into a very beautiful woman, with long, shiny hair. Bruburé tossed his first gourd into the river and it turned into a woman, too, but she was ugly. All the gourds turned into men and women, grown-ups and children. Mebapame's gourds became strong and attractive people. Bruburé's creations were weak and not so beautiful. When they were born in the river, all the people immediately climbed from the water and went to the houses that had been prepared for them. This is how the first village in the world was made.

For a long time everyone lived in peace and happiness. One day, however, Mebapame told the people that the Tocantins river was going to flood. The village and all the land would soon be covered by water. The people were terrified but Mebapame told them that the flood had a good purpose and that all of the children of the river had to spread over the earth and learn to speak different languages. Some of Mebapame's children decided to prepare for the flood. They built a large raft, attached dry gourds so that it would float, and tied the raft to a large rock near the village. Bruburé's children did nothing to prepare for the flood.

Then the river began to rise. It overflowed its banks, covering the village, the forests and the plains. People scattered in every direction. Many of Mebapame's children found safety on the raft; others climbed trees. The rest, together with Bruburé's unprepared children were carried down the river by the raging water. Mebapame and Bruburé climbed into the sky, where they still remain.

For many days water covered everything. In the end, the river returned to its bank. The raft finally landed, and the raft people built a new village on that very spot. They named the new village "Joy." From these children of Mebapame came the Apinaye Indians who now live in the region. The people who had climbed trees could not come down. They turned into bees and wood termites. The other children of Mebapame, along with all of Bruburé's people had been spread all over the earth.

This is why you can find Apinaye Indians in many different places. This is also why there are many different kinds of people all over the world: weak and strong, beautiful and ugly, speaking a variety of languages.



GÊ INDIAN AREA

(Based on information which first appeared in Johannes Wilbert, ed., Folk Literature of the Gê Indians, Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1978.)