

Native American Storytelling Project

Introduction

Storytelling was an important part of many Native American cultures. Since many cultures did not have a written language, tribes relied on oral histories to share their stories with younger generations. “The oral traditions of Native peoples provide entertainment, social interaction for all age-groups, and the transmission of rituals, myths, precautions, remonstrations, advice and other intergenerational knowledge.”¹

Task

You will create a story in a Native American style that describes the impact of European American expansion during the 1800s. Your story must include the following items:

- The story must be at least 500 words long and must depict how European Americans interacted with a Native American tribe and what happened to the tribe as a result.
- The story must be from the point of view of one of the following tribes or tribal leaders:
 - Shawnee / Tecumseh and the Prophet (*Creating America*, p.328-329)
 - Cherokee / Sequoya (*Creating America*, p.375-378)
 - Seminoles / Osceola (*Creating America*, p.378)
 - You may choose a different tribe / tribal leader with your teacher’s permission
- The story must be written in a Native American storytelling style. Elements of the style include:
 - References to the natural world (animals, plants, etc.)
 - Use of symbolism (things that represent other things)
 - Use of repetition to create a sense of expectation (things often happen in fours)
 - Use of formal language (no contractions or slang)
 - Use of a specific story structure:
 - *Introduction*: a harmonious situation (what life was like before European American contact)
 - *Thesis*: one or more episodes showing disruption of harmony (European American contact with the Native Americans)
 - *Antithesis*: measures employed to overcome disruption (how the Native Americans reacted to the European American contact)
 - *Conclusion*: restored harmony (what life was like for the tribe after the contact)²
- The finished product must include visual elements that enhance your story. Forms of a finished product could include:
 - A children’s storybook with at least three hand-drawn illustrations
 - A PowerPoint presentation with text and visual imagery, and which may include pre-recorded narration
 - A live performance with props
 - A puppet show
 - You may choose a different format for your finished product with your teacher’s permission

Evaluation

You will be evaluated on your content, your style, and your visual elements. Good luck and have fun!

¹ <http://www.unm.edu/~abqteach/l&e/00-04-07.htm>

² <http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/native.htm>