**Stories of the Earth & Sky**

**This four-week unit pairs Native American stories with informational text about the earth and sky.**

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**Overview**

* + The unit begins with a discussion about how many stories that explain nature’s mysteries are often passed down orally from generation to generation, and students are asked to share any personal stories about the earth and sky that they have been told. After a brief introduction to many Native Americans’ reverence and respect for the earth and sky, Native American stories are read, compared, and contrasted as a genre. Students alternate reading stories, such as *The Earth Under Sky Bear’s Feet* by Joseph Bruchac, and related informational texts, such as *Zoo in the Sky: A Book of Animal Constellations* by Jacqueline Mitton.Class discussions focus on how the informational text helps us to appreciate literature and how authors take “artistic license” to make a “good story.” Students conduct and present research on constellations. After discussing Vincent van Gogh’s *Starry Night,* students write their own “Starry Night Tale” and publish it on a class webpage. This unit ends with a class discussion and essay response to the essential question.
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**Focus Standards**

* + These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.
    - **RL.4.9:**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.
    - **RI.4.7:**Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
    - **W.4.3:**Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
    - **SL.4.4:**Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
    - **L.4.3:**Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/CCSSI_ELA_Standards.pdf) (1.5 MB)

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**Suggested Student Objectives**

* + - Read and discuss a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts about Native American mound builders and the earth, sun, moon, and stars.
    - Explain how knowledge of Native American mound builders, the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars increases understanding of literature that includes these topics.
    - Write a variety of responses to stories and poems.
    - Perform poetry for classmates.
    - Interpret information in print or online about constellations.
    - Summarize what was learned about the earth, sun, moon, and stars for classmates, using appropriate facts and descriptive details.
    - Write a story based on Vincent van Gogh’s *Starry Night*, incorporating factual information and “fiction” techniques used by authors.
    - Participate in group discussions about Native American mound builders and the earth, sun, moon, and stars.
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**Suggested Works**

* + (E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

**Literary Texts**

**Stories**

Myths and Legends

* + - *Children of the Earth and Sky: Five Stories About Native American Children* (Stephen Krensky and James Watling)
    - *Keepers of the Night: Native American Stories and Nocturnal Activities for Children* (Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac*)*
    - *Coyote Places the Stars* (Harriet Peck Taylor)
    - *Star Boy* (Paul Goble)
    - *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* (Paul Goble)
    - *And Still the Turtle Watched* (Sheila MacGill-Callahan)
    - *Thirteen Moons on Turtle’s Back* (Joseph Bruchac)
    - *The Earth Under Sky Bear’s Feet* (Joseph Bruchac)
    - *Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children* (Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac*)*
    - *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun/La mujer que brillaba aún más que el sol* (Alejandro Cruz Martinez and Fernando Olivera)
    - *A Pride of African Tales* (Donna L. Washington and James Ransome)
    - *How the Stars Fell into the Sky: A Navajo Legend* (Jerrie Oughton and Lisa Desimini) [easier to read]
    - *Ming Lo Moves the Mountain* (Arnold Lobel) (easier)
    - *Moon Rope/Un lazo a la luna: A Peruvian Folktale* (Lois Ehlert and Amy Prince) (easier)
    - *Moonstick: The Seasons of the Sioux* (Eve Bunting and John Sandford) (easier)

General

* + - *Common Ground: The Water, Earth, And Air We Share*(Molly Bang)
    - *Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the Meadow*(Joyce Sidman and Beth Krommes)
    - *My Light*(Molly Bang) (easier)
    - *Midnight on the Moon* (Magic Tree House Book 8) (Mary Pope Osborne and Sal Murdocca) (easier)
    - *Follow the Moon*(Sarah Weeks and Suzanne Duranceau) (easier)
    - *Space Explorers* (The Magic School Bus Chapter Book, No. 4) (Eva Moore and Ted Enik) (easier)

**Stories (Read Aloud/Advanced Readers)**

* + - *The Mission Possible Mystery at Space Center Houston* (Real Kids, Real Places) (Carole Marsh) (advanced)
    - *They Dance in the Sky: Native American Star Myths* (Jean Guard Monroe and Ray A. Williamson) (advanced)

**Poems**

* + - “Indian Names” (Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney)
    - *A Pizza the Size of the Sun*(Jack Prelutsky)

**Informational Texts**

**Informational Text**

Native Americans

* + - *The Mound Builders of Ancient North America* (E. Barrie Kavasch) (E)
    - *Mounds of Earth and Shell (Native Dwellings)*(Bonnie Shemie)

Space (Review from Grade 3)

* + - *Discovering Mars: The Amazing Story of the Red Planet*(Melvin Berger and Joan Holub) (E)
    - *Can You Hear A Shout In Space? Questions and Answers About Space Exploration* (Scholastic Question and Answer) (Melvin Berger) (EA)
    - *Space: A Nonfiction Companion to Midnight on the Moon* (Magic Tree House Research Guide, No. 6) (Mary Pope and Wil Osborne and Sal Murdocca)

Earth, Sun, Moon, and Stars

* + - *Earth: Our Planet in Space*(Seymour Simon)
    - *Earth* (Scholastic, A True Book) (Elaine Landau)
    - *Earth (Picture Reference)* (World Book) (Christine Butler-Taylor)
    - *G is for Galaxy* (Janis Campbell, Cathy Collison, and Alan Stacy)
    - *Do Stars Have Points?*(Scholastic Question and Answer) (Melvin Berger) (EA)
    - *I Wonder Why Stars Twinkle: And Other Questions About Space*(Carole Stott)
    - *A Child's Introduction to the Night Sky: The Story of the Stars, Planets, and Constellations--and How You Can Find Them in the Sky*(Michael Driscoll and Meredith Hamilton)
    - *Constellations*(Scholastic, True Books: Space) (Diane M. and Paul P. Sipiera)
    - *Find the Constellations*(H.A. Rey)
    - *Zoo in the Sky: A Book of Animal Constellations*(Jacqueline Mitton and Christina Balit)
    - *See the Stars: Your First Guide to the Night Stars*(Ken Croswell)
    - *Constellations*(Scholastic, A True Book) (Flora Kim)
    - *The Moon* (Seymour Simon)
    - *The Moon*(Starting with Space) (Paulette Bourgeois, Cynthia Pratt Nicolson, and Bill Slavin)
    - *The Sun*(Seymour Simon)
    - *The Sun* (Scholastic, A True Book) (Elaine Landau)
    - *The Sun*(Starting with Space) (Paulette Bourgeois and Bill Slavin)
    - *Stars*(Scholastic, True Books: Space) (Paul P. Sipiera)
    - *The Stars*(Starting with Space) (Cynthia Pratt Nicolson and Bill Slavin)

**Informational Text (Read Aloud/Advanced Readers)**

* + - *A Walk through the Heavens: A Guide to Stars and Constellations and their Legends*(Milton D. Heifetz and Wil Tirion)

**Art, Music, and Media**

**Art**

* + - John Constable, [Study of Clouds](http://nga.gov.au/Exhibition/CONSTABLE/Detail.cfm?IRN=144471&ViewID=2&MnuID=1) (1822)
    - John Constable, [Hampstead Heath, Looking Towards Harrow at Sunset](http://nga.gov.au/Exhibition/CONSTABLE/Detail.cfm?IRN=143279&ViewID=2) (1823)
    - Louisa Matthíasdóttir, [Gul](http://www.artmuseum.is/desktopdefault.aspx/3374_view-44/tabid-2182/3369_read-647/) (1990)
    - El Greco, [View of Toledo](http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/collection_database/european_paintings/view_of_toledo_el_greco_domenikos_theotokopoulos/objectview_enlarge.aspx?page=39&sort=0&sortdir=asc&keyword=&fp=1&dd1=11&dd2=0&vw=1&collID=11&OID=110001017&vT=1&hi=0&ov=0) (c. 1595)
    - Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night* (1889)
    - Alfred Stieglitz, [Equivalents](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=44200) (1923)
    - Albert Pinkham Ryder, [Seacoast in Moonlight](http://www.phillipscollection.org/willo/w/size3/1708w.jpg) (1890)
    - Piet Mondrian, [View from the Dunes with Beach and Piers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%27View_from_the_Dunes_with_Beach_and_Piers,_Domburg%27,_oil_and_pencil_on_cardboard_painting_by_Mondrian,_1909,_Museum_of_Modern_Art,_(New_York_City).jpg) (1909)
    - Vija Celmins, [Untitled #3 (Comet)](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=100225), (1996)
    - Jean-Francois Millet, [Landscape with a Peasant Women](http://www.jeanmillet.org/Landscape-with-a-Peasant-Woman,-early-1870s.html) (early 1870s)
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**Sample Activities and Assessments**

* + **Introductory Activity/Class Discussion**

*Children of the Earth and Sky*is a book that will help us learn about Native American traditions and cultures. While reading this book together, we will point out instances in which the Native American’s respect for the earth and sky is described or inferred. Your teacher will ask you to write, on Post-It notes or in your journal, how the earth and sky are described in Native American literature so we can compare the portrayals with what you already know about these topics. Do you have any stories about the earth or sky that you were told by your family when you were young? (RL.4.3, RL.4.9, SL.4.1a,b,c,d, SL.4.2, L.4.3a,b,c)

**Literary Graphic Organizer**

As a class, we will keep a chart with the categories listed below of the Native American and other stories we’ve read about the earth and sky. As the chart is filled in, we will use the information to talk about what we learned from literature.

* + - Title and author
    - Which culture is this story from?
    - What role does the earth or sky play in this story? (e.g., personified character, setting, etc.)
    - What is important about the character’s interaction with the earth or sky?
    - Summary
    - Theme of the story
    - What is unique about this story’s portrayal of the earth and/or sky?

Code your book with Post-It note(s), or write your response on a white board or in your journal, before each section of the class chart is filled in. (RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.5, RL.4.9)

**Class Discussion**

Let’s compare and contrast how the earth and sky are treated in Native American stories and other texts. Look back in the stories and poems we’ve read for specific lines or paragraphs in order to find specific details. (SL.4.1a,b,c,d, RL.4.9, L.4.3a,b,c)

**Class Discussion**

First, we will read and discuss a story about rock carving, such as *And Still the Turtle Watched*by Sheila MacGill-Callahan. Then, we will read informational books, such as *The Mound Builders of Ancient North America*by E. Barrie Kavasch or *Mounds of Earth and Shell* byBonnie Shemie, which tell why the Native Americans created structures and dwellings from the earth. Your teacher may ask you to write, on a Post-It note, on a white board, or in your journal, what you learned about the purposeful nature of Native American artifacts and structures. Finally, we will review the story and see if we notice any additional information or insights that we didn’t notice the first time. (RL.4.1, RI.4.1, RL.4.3, RI.4.3, RI.4.9, SL.4.1a,b,c,d, SL.4.2, L.4.3a,b,c)

**Poetry Response/Fluency**

Read and discuss the meaning of the poem “Indian Names” byLydia Howard Huntley Sigourney. What is the message of the poem? Locate the rivers from the poem on a map of the United States. Discuss additional names of places whose names may have Native American origins, especially local places, and keep an ongoing list in your journal. Divide the poem into stanzas, and, with a group of three other classmates, perform the poem as a quartet. (RL.4.4, SL.4.1a,b,c,d, L.4.4c, L.4.3a,b,c)

**Informational Text Graphic Organizer**

As a class, we will keep a chart of information learned about constellations using the categories below. With a partner, research a constellation on the Internet. Make sure to look for information in charts, graphs, diagrams, or interactive elements.

Constellation Name

* + - Where does the name come from?
    - What is the definition of a constellation?
    - What is unique about this constellation?
    - What does it look like (draw a picture)?

In your journal, write what you learn, as well as where you found the information, in case you need to go back to find a reference. Present your findings to the class. As a class, complete the class chart of all the constellations. (SL.4.2, SL.4.3, SL.4.4, W.4.7, RI.4.1, RI.4.3, RI.4.7, RI.4.8, RI.4.9)

**Journal Writing**

Following partner presentations about constellations (above), write a summary of what you learned, using appropriate facts and descriptive details. (W.4.2a,b,c,d,e, W.4.4, W4.7, L.4.1a,b,c,d,e,f,g, L.4.2a,b,c,d, L.4.3a,b,c)

**Literary Response**

Choose one of the stories about the earth or sky, such as *Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the Meadow*by Joyce Sidman and Beth Krommes or *A Pride of African Tales* by Donna L. Washington and James Ransome. Compare how the facts we know about the earth and sky are modified in order to make a good story. This is called taking “artistic license.” Keep an on-going T-chart in your journal with two columns—fact and fiction—to track the amount of artistic license taken in each book we read. Write a response to this question in your journal: “Why do you think the author changed some facts and kept others?” (RL.4.9, RL.4.1, W.4.4)

**Art Appreciation/Narrative Writing**

After looking at and discussing as a class Vincent van Gogh’s *Wheat Field with Crows*, we will write stories which could be illustrated by the painting. Begin by outlining your story using the “[Somebody-Wanted-But-So](http://wvde.state.wv.us/strategybank/Somebody-Wanted-But-So.html)” graphic organizer. Then, make a list of the main events for your story. Next, add details by incorporating some facts you learned from your research, as well as some imaginary information, because we have learned that taking “artistic license” is an effective technique that authors use to build a story. Write a draft of your story and work with a partner to choose words and phrases that have the effect you want. Once you and your partner believe your story is of the highest quality, you will be asked to record yourself reading it. Upload this as a podcast to the class webpage, which will have Vincent van Gogh’s painting displayed nearby.(W.4.3a,b,c,d,e, W.4.4, W.4.5, W.4.6, W.4.7, W.4.8, SL.4.5, L.4.3a,b,c, L.4.5a,b,c, L.4.1a,b,c,d,e,f,g, L.4.2a,b,c,d)

**Word Study**

Let’s examine words that describe the earth and sky. As an individual and as a class, keep an index card file of new words learned in this unit (i.e., astronaut, astronomer, constellation, eclipse, etc.). Keeping the words on index cards will allow you to use and sort the words by spelling feature, root words, prefixes, and suffixes. Find prefixes (astro-) and suffixes (-ologist, -ology) and discuss how the prefixes and suffixes add clues to the part of speech and meaning of the words. Consult reference materials to confirm pronunciations and clarify the meaning of the words and phrases. (Note: This will be an ongoing activity all year long.)In addition, you may be asked to create an individual [semantic map](http://chs.smuhsd.org/learning_community/content_literacy/semantic_word_map.html) of related words in order to help you explore understanding of the interconnectedness of words related to the earth and sky. (L.4.4a,b,c)

**Class Discussion/Reflective Essay**

As a class, summarize what was learned in this unit as it relates to the essential question (“How are the earth and sky portrayed in fiction and nonfiction?”). Following the class discussion, write your response in your journal. Work with a partner to edit and strengthen your writing before sharing with your teacher. (W.4.9a,b, W.4.4, W.4.5, L.4.1a,b,c,d,e,f,g, L.4.2a,b,c,d)

**Class Discussion/Art Connection**

Select two or more works to show the class.  Show them one at a time and ask students to study each for at least a few minutes.  Discuss each work in turn, asking students to explain the extent to which they believe the artist took liberties with the subject versus depicting the subject as it really appeared.

**Essay Writing/Art Connection**

Select two works that focus on either sky or earth. Students will compare and contrast the two works, writing a short essay outlining their responses. Have students present the works along with their essay to the class.

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**Additional Resources**

* + - [Integrating Literacy Into the Study of the Earth's Surface](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/integrating-literacy-into-study-899.html) (ReadWriteThink) (W.4.7)  
      Note: Science trade books are an invaluable tool for supporting science learning with literacy. This lesson introduces third- through fifth-grade students to the bodies of water on the Earth's surface, including ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, and oceans.
    - [Earth Verse: Using Science in Poetry](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/earth-verse-using-science-1141.html) (ReadWriteThink) (RL.4.5)  
      Note: This lesson is a great way to teach both scientific and English content to a class, although the teacher can easily choose another book and subject area. In this lesson, students listen to poems in the book *Science Verse* by Jon Scieszka.
    - [Science writer Seymour Simon was born in 1931](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/science-writer-seymour-simon-20668.html) (ReadWriteThink) (W.4.7)  
      Note: Have your students select and explore a scientific topic in detail using Seymour Simon's nonfiction science books. Students then use what they learn to write original poetry on the topic.
    - [Constellation Myth Project](http://www.middleschoolscience.com/myth.htm) (MiddleSchoolScience.Com) (W4.3)  
      The purpose of this project is to create a poster for an original myth and an original constellation. (Note: This is a middle school reference that could be modified for fourth grade.)
    - [Native American Lore](http://www.ilhawaii.net/~stony/loreindx.html)
    - [NASA: Spirit of Discovery, Stars and Constellations](http://www2.semo.edu/mast/mlc/stars.htm) (Southeast Missouri State University)
    - [Star Bright, Starry Night](http://makingartfun.com/htm/f-maf-art-library/vincent-van-gogh-lesson.htm) (artLibrary) Note: This is a lesson plan for recreating Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*.
    - [Our Earth as Art Gallery](http://earthasart.gsfc.nasa.gov/index.htm) (NASA, Goddard Space Flight Center)
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**Terminology**

* + - artistic license
    - facts
    - details
    - legend
    - lore
    - myth
    - narrative writing
    - research
    - theme
    - word choice
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**Making Interdisciplinary Connections**

* + **This unit teaches:**
    - **Art**:  Van Gogh, John Constable, Piet Mondrian
    - **Science:**
      * Space (a review of planets from grade 3)
      * Astronomy (e.g., the sun as a star and as a source of light and heat; how an eclipse happens; the Milky Way and Andromeda galaxies; constellations such as the Big Dipper; the moon and its phases, etc.)
    - **History/geography:** Introduction to culture and life of Native Americans (e.g., Mound Builders)

**This unit could be extended to teach:**

* + - **Science:**
      * The earth, and its layers and formations (e.g., crust, mantle, core, volcanoes, hot springs and geysers, how mountains are formed, etc.)
      * The atmosphere (e.g., troposphere, stratosphere, mesosphere, thermosphere, exosphere; how the sun and the earth heat the atmosphere, etc.)
    - **History/geography:** Introduction to culture and life of other native cultures, such as:
      * Mayas, (e.g., knowledge of astronomy and mathematics, located in Central America, etc.)
      * Aztecs (e.g., warrior culture, Tenochtitlan, located in Mexico, etc.)
      * Incas (e.g., empire along the coast of South America, Machu Picchu, Cuzco, etc.)