

Polar Legends



Objective

Students will read legends about arctic animals, nature, and people. They will explore story characters and create arctic legends of their own.

Materials

- paper
- colored pencils or markers
- books listed below or other reference materials

Background

Myths, legends, historical accounts, and storytelling have been a part of Native American life for centuries. Without established written languages, people remembered and recorded historical events and traditions through oral presentations. Legends often explain natural phenomena, how and why the world behaves as it does.

Books that relate Native American legends include: *The Wolf and the Raven. Totem Poles of Southeastern Alaska*, by Viola E. Garfield and Linn A. Forest, University of Washington Press, 1961; *Tlingit Tales, Potlach and Totem Poles*, by Lorie K. Harris. Naturegraph Publishers, 1985; and *Tlingit, Their Art, Culture and Legends*, by Dan

Action

1. Divide students into groups of four or five and distribute reference materials.
2. Read selected legends and stories aloud to class or individually in groups.
3. As a class or in groups, discuss the following points. What parts do these legends have in common? Do they center around a theme or set of themes. For example, does a legend explain the creation of the earth, moon, or stars?
4. Ask student groups to create an original story outline. The outline should include a main character found in the Arctic, supporting character(s) (at least one), and action. Action could include a conflict and resolution plot or a problem-and- solution plot.
5. Students can present their outlines to the class. As an option, students could illustrate outlines with paintings or sketches.