

**Project: Art - a Story Board**

**Pourquoi stories** reveal cultural traditions from Australia to Zimbabwe. *Pourquoi* means "why" in French. Pourquoi tales are old legends told to explain why certain events happened. These tales often start in the past, e.g. *A long, long time ago . . .* and end when the explanation is complete. Pourquoi tales are most often concerned with animals and the natural world.

In learning and retelling traditional Pourquoi stories, **7<sup>th</sup> grade art** students will incorporate basics and essentials of design in constructing a story board to designate a chosen or original story.

**Link to Essential Understandings:**

Essential Understanding #3 states,  
*"The ideology of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.*

**Objectives:**

- To understand the concept of explanatory myth in several diverse cultures, ultimately emphasizing a regional tribe.
- To recognize the similarities and explain the contrasts in pourquoi themes from different cultures
- To showcase the diversity of Native people.
- To diminish two common stereotypes about Native Americans: that they represent cultures of the past and that they are one cultural group, instead of many nations with unique customs.
- To foster a positive identity of Native people in a world view.
- To encourage the exploration of one's own and other cultures

**Procedure:**

- Students listen to some Pourquoi stories, specifically from Martiniquais and West African francophone cultures and (especially) Native American cultures. The instructor should preface the stories with information about "human nature wanting to see something familiar in something unfamiliar," and that explanatory stories are attempts to imaginatively explain scientific phenomena that early people had no other way to explain. Early people were fascinated by the cycles of nature; the cycle of birth-growth-death-possible rebirth; the movement of the sun; the origin of plants and animals, their peculiarities, or how they were changed in some way in the past; and the origin of land formations, just to name a few. Absent another explanation,

people "created one that fit with their beliefs about the interrelationship of all things."

- Students will research and choose a favorite explanatory Native American story or will create an original pourquoi story of a local Montana nature, involving animals, landscape, and plant life of surrounding area or of the constellations. The story board may also involve a specific event of individual interest or the student's heritage.

**Research involved:**

- Research Blackfeet Pourquoi stories
- Research flora of Glacier County, including Glacier National Park
- Research wild animals of our region.
- Research constellations and their connection to Blackfeet people.
- Research importance of northwestern landmarks (Sweetgrass Hills, Chief Mountain for example) to the Blackfeet people.
- Research making of story boards

**Resources:**

- Native American Lore  
<http://www.ilhawaii.net/%7Estony/loreindx.html>
- Legends of the Blackfeet and of the Kiowa  
<http://www.ocbtracker.com/ladypixel/legend.html>
- *Creative Storytelling: Choosing, Inventing, and Sharing Tales for Children* by Jack Maguire
- *Names on the Face of Montana* by Roberta Carkeek Cheney
- Field trip to view and identify indigenous area plants (for example, in Eagle Falls near Two Medicine Lake in Glacier National Park there are over 200 plants that are identified in English and Blackfeet.)
- *Montana Native Plants and Early Peoples* by Jeff Hart
- Outside viewing of constellations in the evening sky (for example, Traditional lore and practical use of astronomy by Indian elders and representation of Blackfeet constellations. Presenter: Leo Bird, chemistry, biology and astronomy teacher at Browning High School. )