

Creation Myth Poem or Story: Created by Ginnye Cubel

This exercise may be used for a large or small group and will take 60 to 90 minutes. First, separate the students into groups. Then, have their Butler mentors explain/discuss creation myths by showing the students the following three myths. After the students understand, all the students in the group should work together to write a new creation myth utilizing what they learned from the three examples. Urge students not to copy the example directly but to instead look for creative ways to innovate these archetypal myths. If there are students who would like to write their myth on their own, please allow them to do so. Here are some examples of creation myths:

Mayan Creation Myth

In the beginning were only Tepeu and Gucumatz. These two sat together and thought, and whatever they thought came into being. They thought earth, and there it was. They thought mountains, and so there were. They thought trees, and sky, and animals. Each came into being. Because none of these creatures could praise them, they formed more advanced beings of clay. Because the clay beings fell apart when wet, they made beings out of wood; however, the wooden beings caused trouble on the earth. The Gods sent a great flood to wipe out these beings, so that they could start over. With the help of Mountain Lion, Coyote, Parrot, and Crow they fashioned four new beings. These four beings performed well and are the ancestors of the Quiché.

Mande Creation Myth

The Mande people of southern Mali think that at first Mangala was alone. Although Mangala did not have a physical form (he was “perceived to be a round, energetic presence” he was troubled by having matter inside of him. After removing the matter he tried to turn it into a seed. This first seed fell apart, but instead of giving up, Mangala decided to try again. This time, he used two seeds and placed them inside of a womb. The seeds transformed into fish. One of these fish, Pemba, tried to escape and in doing so created Earth but almost destroyed the womb. Mangala used Pemba's brother Farro and salvaged his creation by turning it into the sun. Farro was turned into a human and populated the Earth with his followers.

Aztec Creation Myth

The mother of the Aztec creation story was called Coatlique (the Lady of the Skirt of Snakes). She was created in the image of the unknown, decorated with skulls, snakes, and lacerated hands. There are no cracks in her body and she is a perfect monolith (a totality of intensity and self-containment, yet her features were square and decapitated).

Coatlique was first impregnated by an obsidian knife and gave birth to Coyolxauhqui, goddess of the moon, and to a group of male offspring, who became the stars. Then one day Coatlique found a ball of feathers, which she tucked into her bosom. When she looked for it later, it was gone, at which time she realized that she was again pregnant. Her children, the moon and stars did not believe her story. Ashamed of their mother, they resolved to kill her. A goddess could only give birth once, to the original litter of divinity and no more. During the time that they were plotting her demise, Coatlique gave birth to the fiery god of war, Huitzilopochtli. With the help of a fire serpent, he destroyed his brothers and sister, murdering them in a rage. He beheaded Coyolxauhqui and threw her body into a deep gorge in a mountain, where it lies dismembered forever. The natural cosmos of the Indians was born of catastrophe. The heavens literally crumbled to pieces. The earth mother fell and was fertilized, while her children were torn apart by fratricide and then scattered and disjointed throughout the universe.