

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

# Native American Literature

## The Sky Tree

In the beginning, Earth was covered with water. In Sky Land, there were people living as they do now on Earth. In the middle of that land was the great Sky Tree. All of the food which the people in that Sky Land ate came from the great tree.

The old chief of that land lived with his wife, whose name was Aataentsic<sup>1</sup>, meaning “Ancient Woman,” in their long house near the great tree. It came to be that the old man became sick, and nothing could cure him. He grew weaker and weaker until it seemed he would die. Then a dream came to him, and he called Aataentsic to him.

“I have dreamed,” he said, “and in my dream I saw how I can be healed. I must be given the fruit which grows at the very top of Sky Tree. You must cut it down and bring that fruit to me.”

Aataentsic took her husband’s stone ax and went to the great tree. As soon as she struck it, it split in half and toppled over. As it fell, a hole opened in Sky Land, and the tree fell through the hole. Aataentsic returned to the place where the old chief waited.

“My husband,” she said, “when I cut the tree, it split in half and then fell through a great hole. Without the tree there can be no life. I must follow it.”

Then, leaving her husband, she went back to the hole in Sky Land and threw herself after the great tree.

After Aataentsic fell, Turtle looked up and saw her. Immediately Turtle called together all the water animals and told them what she had seen.

“What should be done?” Turtle said.

Beaver answered her. “You are the one who saw this happen. Tell us what to do.”

“All of you must dive down,” Turtle said. “Bring up soil from the bottom, and place it on my back.”

Immediately all of the water animals began to dive down and bring up soil. Beaver, Mink, Muskrat, and Otter each brought up pawfuls of wet soil and placed the soil on Turtle’s back until they had made an island of great size. When they were through, Aataentsic settled down gently on the new Earth, and the pieces of the great tree fell beside her and took root.

1. Aataentsic (ay-tay-ent-sik)

-from the Huron-Eastern  
Woodland tradition

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## The Sky Tree- Connecting to Creation Myths

Directions: After reading *The Sky Tree*, compare the happenings of what is going on in the story to other well-known creation stories (i.e. Christian, Islam, Muslim, etc.). Fill out the boxes after watching the videos on other creation stories and compare it to *The Sky Tree*.

Christianity

The Sky Tree

1.



Islam

2.



Buddhism

3.



Hindu

4.



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## **The Sky Tree- Study Questions**

1. Why do you think the woman's name is Ancient Woman?
  
2. In many creation stories there is a woman who takes a "great fall." Recall other tales that include a woman "taking a fall" and explain why you believe woman always takes the tumble.
  
3. Eating from a tree of fruit is also an important story of creation. Why do you think the symbol of fruit is also an important factor to many tales?
  
4. Explain the woman's sacrifice. Why do you think she chose to jump?
  
5. What does the rooting of the tree symbolize?