

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

# Native American Literature

## Trickster Tales

What is a trickster tale? Many Native Americans used stories to pass down through the generations to provide future members with information about **moral and ethical situations**- they were kind of a warning system to make future generations do the “right thing.” As with most stories, trickster tales have a formula that one must follow:

**Step One:** Must have a natural setting and characters- Characters must be well-developed and must include animal characters with human qualities (i.e. A coyote that can speak, etc.)

**Step Two:** Must include a magical happening or magical transformation that refers to an explanation to something in the natural world. In most trickster tales, the magical happening is a creation of a characteristic of an animal (i.e. a buck’s antlers, an elephant’s tusks, etc) or a natural force in the natural world (i.e. tornados, hurricanes, etc.).

**Step Three:** Must include a trickster. Someone in the story that either tries to trick all other characters or tries to foil the plan for everyone involved.

**Step Four:** Include a moral in the story. The ending of the trickster tale needs to serve as a moral compass for the reader- a cautionary tale that bad things will happen or things will not go your way if you do wrong.

### Example Trickster Tale: A Snail’s Tale

There once was an old woman who traveled from town to town with a large bag she carried on her back. As she traveled from town to town, many villagers said, “Oh, what a nice woman, let’s help her through her journey.” They would let her stay in their homes and dine at their tables, all the while not knowing that she was stealing from them during her stay.

The Great Eagle saw her evil doings and told her, “Old Woman, if you do not stop your evil ways, a great burden will be placed upon you.”

The Old Woman looked at the Great Eagle and said, “Oh Great Eagle, I have changed my ways. Thank you for believing in me!”

The next town held many villagers whose homes held many treasures. The Old Woman stayed with the most prosperous family in the village. She could not help herself in taking the family’s most prized possession- a clay pot lined with a buffalo hide.

The Old Woman thought, “Surely one item won’t hurt.”

As the Old Woman left the village with the pot in her bag, the Great Eagle swooped down and told her, “Old Woman, you have been warned, and from now on you shall crawl to every destination you seek always carrying a heavy burden upon you back!”

The Old Woman started to shrink to the ground unable to move her arms and legs. She started slithering on her belly, noticing a heavy item upon her back. As she looked behind her, she noticed a great shell resting on her back.

Thus the arrival of the first snail.

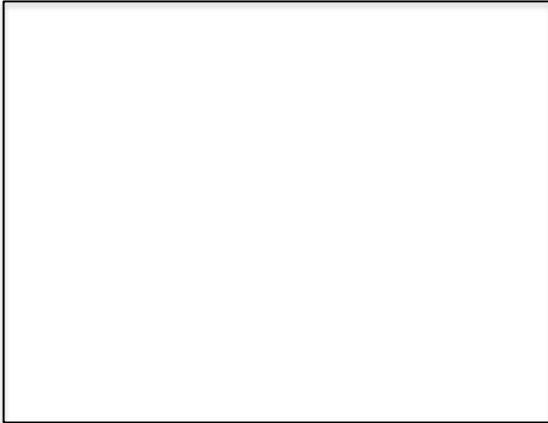
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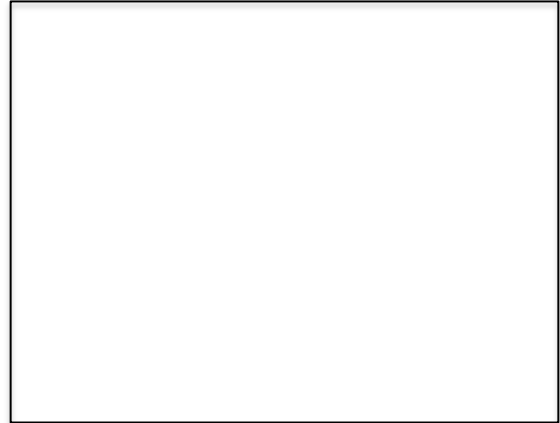
## Trickster Tale Work-Up

**Directions:** Brainstorm the information you would want in your trickster tale. Use the boxes to draw or write certain aspects you would like your tale to have and use this sheet to create your own trickster tale.

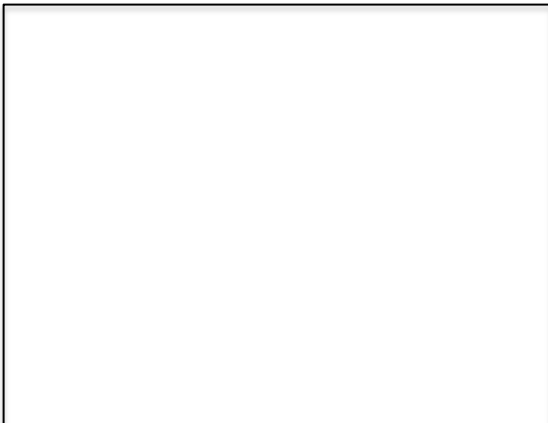
1. Think of an animal or natural force and draw it in the box.



2. What trait are you highlighting in your story? Highlight it here.



3. There has to be a conflict or reason the animal or nature gains the trait. Who is the “trickster” and what is the conflict in your story?



4. What is the magical transformation in your story? How does this create a good result or moral for your story?

