

Indigenous Lesson Ideas

Grade Level: K-5

Overview: There are many Indigenous stories that are related to how the world came to be. They include creation-type stories for the entire universe, as well as stories about how various animals came to possess their unique features and abilities. The suggestions in this document provide opportunities to share these tales, to inspire awe (and perhaps some degree of reverence) for our natural world, and to honor relevant [UN-observed international days](#) (e.g., World Wildlife Day, World Water Day, Earth Day, Indigenous People’s Day) with students.

Background Information: There are various tidbits you can offer, depending on grade level and what standards you are trying to meet. Here are a few ideas:

- The term “Indigenous” refers to those people who were on the land first, before settlers arrived from other parts of the world. Other terms used include First Peoples/Nations, Aboriginal Peoples, and Native Peoples.
- Indigenous peoples/nations represent distinct cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups. The extent to which any particular group has been able to retain their languages and cultural practices of origin varies. Losses can often be tied directly to colonization, resettlement, decimation, and erasure.
- There are at least 250 million Indigenous people in the world today. This [interactive map](#) provides lots of information about territories and languages. It can also be used to identify the native tribes in your local area.

Indigenous Stories

Several books offer authentic Indigenous stories for kids. Here are a few you might want to have on your shelves.

Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac (Fulcrum, 1997).

Native American Animal Stories, told by Joseph Bruchac (Fulcrum Publishing, 1992).

Stories from the Billabong by James Vance Marshall and Francis Firebrace (Frances Lincoln Children’s Books, 2008).

The Girl Who Helped Thunder and Other Native American Folktales, told by James Bruchac and Joseph Bruchac (Sterling, 2008).

How the Kangaroo Got Her Pouch

Materials Needed: one mama kangaroo template, one joey template, and one popsicle stick per student; recycled brown grocery/lunch bags; tape/glue; scissors; crayons/markers/colored pencils.

Prep (optional): Cut quickly (but closely) around the joey templates. Cut small pouches (measuring about 3" x 3") out of the recycled brown bags.

Process: Let the kids color the mama kangaroo and tape/glue the pouch to her belly – just along the two sides. Then, tape/glue the joey template to the popsicle stick. Insert the popsicle stick into the pouch, so the joey can bounce in and out of it.



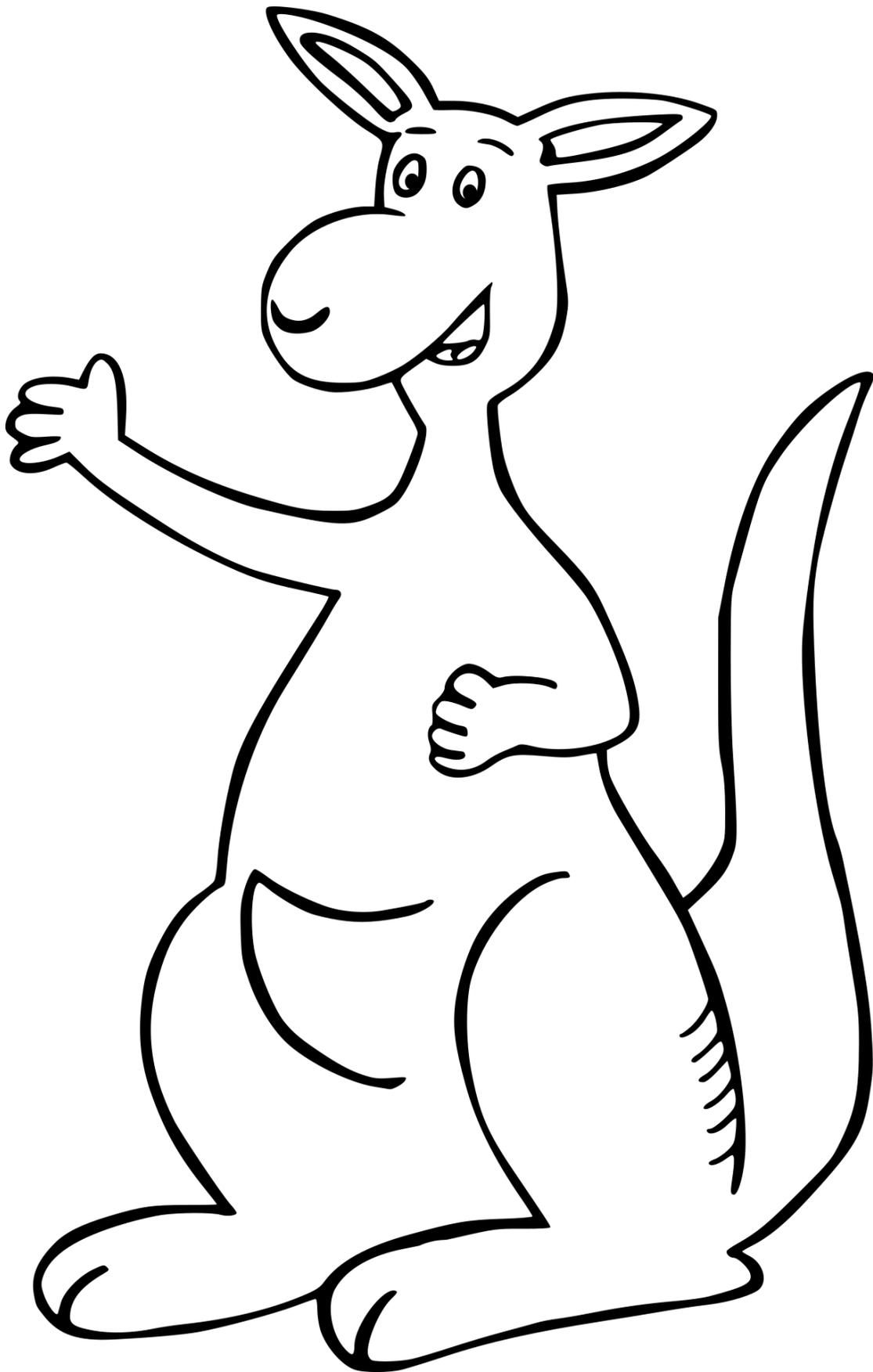


Image from Pixabay: ArtRose

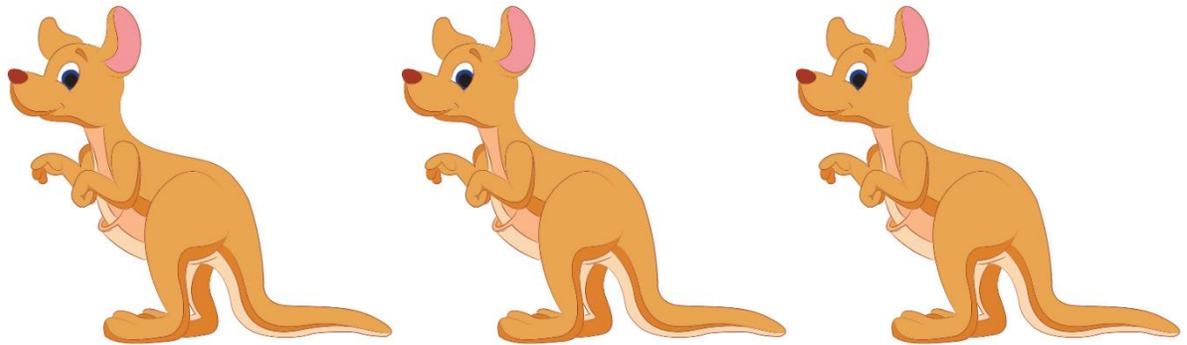
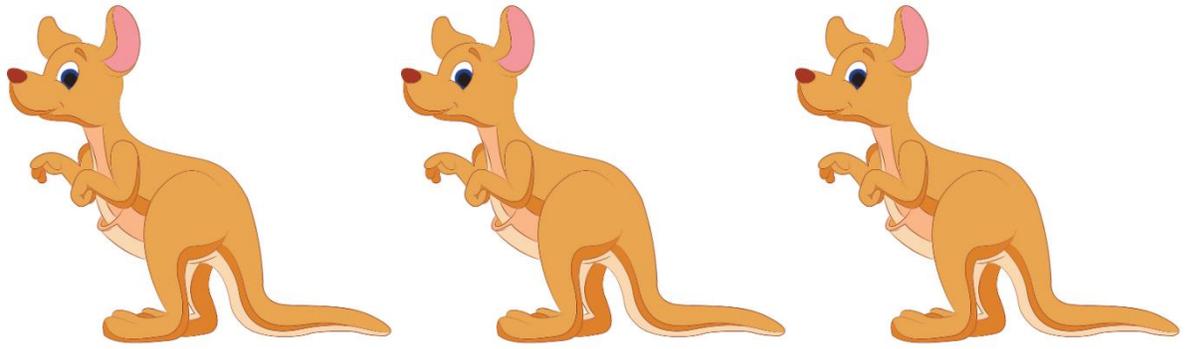


Image: Pixabay/CorrelateStudio

How Grandmother Spider Stole the Sun

Materials Needed: one square of paper (any kind, any color; we use 6" x 6") per person, scissors, scraps of paper for suns and spiders. Background paper and tape/glue are optional.

Helpful Hints: If making the spider web template is too difficult for young kids, consider offering a spider web template. If you have a group that can "be careful," consider tissue paper squares, which can be cut with kid-friendly scissors.

Process: Students can make the spider web by folding and cutting the paper square as shown below. Then, they can cut a sun and a small spider to add to the web. Attaching the entire craft to a sheet of background paper can provide a nice finishing touch.

Images 1-2: Give each person a pre-cut paper square. Fold the paper in half. And then fold in half again.

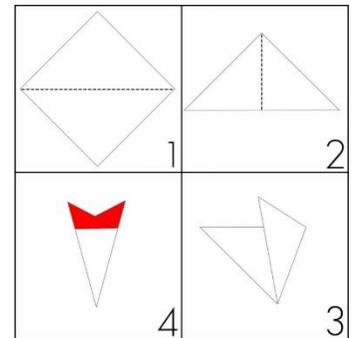


Image 3: Turn the triangle, so that the point is at the bottom. Fold it into thirds by folding the right half up a bit and then the left half up a bit. It might take a few tries to get it right.

Image 4: Cut off the part shown in red, so you have a triangle that is straight across the top.

Image 5-6: Cut off the bottom point of the cone and make the top concave.

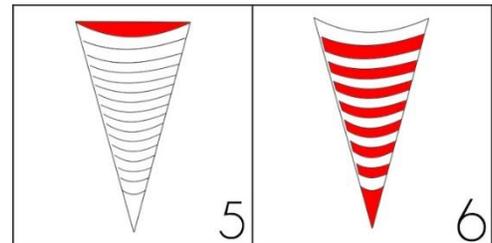


Image 6: Then, make little slices into the side of the cone. Discard the parts in red. Notice that there is a little bit of white remaining on the left-hand side.

Don't to cut all the way through.



Unfold to reveal a lovely spider web!

Complete the image by adding a sun and a spider (a figure 8 with 8 legs).

Then, if desired, glue the completed web onto a background page.

Activities

Several Native American games can be found in *Native American Games and Stories* by James Bruchac and Joseph Bruchac, Fulcrum, 2000.

We have used Hubbub (pp. 42-46), Moccasin (pp. 46-39), and the Rock Game (pp. 80-82) with kids in Grades 3-5. We have also used adapted versions of those games for younger kids.