

STARDUST TO STORYTELLERS: Mythology

UNIT 2: EARTH FORMING

Teacher's Guide

Essential Question

Why do so many stories say the earth rose up from the water, and what does that tell us about the people telling them?

UNIT OVERVIEW

ABOUT THIS UNIT

This unit invites learners to explore how different cultures have explained the formation of the earth itself. Through three myths drawn from the Maidu, Blackfoot, and Hawaiian traditions, learners build skills in reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and narrative writing while developing genuine appreciation for diverse cultural worldviews.

The unit culminates in a retelling project where learners take one myth and rewrite it from a different character's perspective or angle, applying everything they have learned about strong verbs, sequence writing, and narrative craft.

PRIMARY TEXTS

Story / Chapter	Source Book	Cultural Origin
Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea	In the Beginning — Virginia Hamilton	Maidu / California
Traveling to Form the World	In the Beginning — Virginia Hamilton	Blackfoot / Great Plains
Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao Seek Superheroic Adventure	Queer Mythology — Guido A. Sanchez	Hawaiian

SUGGESTED COMPANION PICTURE BOOKS

These titles are ideal for reading aloud to open or close a unit. They are NOT the basis of any lesson plan.

- [The Pele Stories — Gabrielle Ahuli'i](#)
- [The Princess and the Warrior: A Tale of Two Volcanoes — Duncan Tonatiuh](#)
- [The Story of Turtle Island by Dallas Arcand](#), illustrated by Faizon S
- Alternative Videos
 - [Mohawk Turtle Island Myth](#)

- [The Ojibwe Legend of Turtle Island](#)

SCIENCE CONNECTIONS (S2S LESSONS 6-8)

This unit pairs naturally with science instruction on plate tectonics, continents forming, volcanoes, and land rising from the sea. Look for Science Connection callouts on individual lesson pages.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE & BACKGROUND

- Earth-diver myths, in which a small animal dives into a primordial ocean and brings up a handful of mud that becomes the first land, appear across North America, Siberia, and South Asia. The Maidu story is one of the most complete and well-known examples.
- The Blackfoot creator Old Man shapes the world through physical movement, naming and pressing the landscape into form as he travels. The story reflects a relationship between creator and land that is intimate and embodied.
- The Hawaiian Islands were formed by volcanic activity, a geological reality woven into Hawaiian mythology. Pele is the volcano goddess; Hi'iaka is her sister, associated with healing, dance, and compassion.
- Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao appear in Queer Mythology as figures whose love for each other is inseparable from the volcanic landscape they travel across. Their story is among the oldest queer love stories in Pacific mythology.
- The woman in the Blackfoot myth who throws the stone is one of mythology's quietly consequential figures. Her choice is not presented as a mistake or a punishment but as a decision that shapes human life.

READING FOCUS AREAS

- Readers identify the problem in a story and trace how characters work together or alone to solve it.
- Readers notice how a story's setting (ocean, volcano, frozen tundra) shapes what characters do and what is possible.
- When comparing two myths, readers look for what is the same and what is different, then ask: why does this difference matter?

WRITING FOCUS AREAS (NARRATIVE WRITING)

- Use strong, specific verbs that show exactly what is happening.
- Describe a setting using sensory detail, what a character would see, hear, feel, and smell.
- Show how a character's actions lead to consequences, using sequence words: first, then, next, finally.
- Develop a focused narrative with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

DISCUSSION AND SPEAKING

- Describe your mental image of a setting using specific words. What details from the text led you to picture it that way?
- When sharing a response, use one piece of evidence from the text to support your interpretation.
- Practice restating a key idea in your own words before writing a response.

UNIT VOCABULARY

Word	Definition	From the Text
Earth	The ground, soil, or land; also used as a proper noun (Earth Starter) in the Maidu myth	"There was water everywhere. There was no earth."
Submerged	Completely covered by water	"All was dark. There was water everywhere."
Emerge	To come out from underneath or from within something	The earth pebble grew and emerged from the water as the world.
Plunge	To dive suddenly and forcefully downward	"Turtle plunged to the bottom of the dark water."
Terrain	A stretch of land and its physical features	Old Man shaped the terrain as he traveled north.
Traverse	To travel across or through a landscape	Old Man traversed the whole world, giving each place its shape.
Sacred	Connected to something holy, deserving deep respect	The land was sacred, shaped by the creator's own hands.
Landscape	The visible features of an area of land	Hi'iaka's love became part of the landscape around her.

LESSON MAP

#	Topic	Activities	Materials / Text
1	Predicting and Reading	Predict from the title; read the myth; discuss what surprised you	"Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea" — Hamilton, Maidu
2	Important Nouns and Verbs	Review nouns and verbs; identify 3 important nouns and 3 important verbs from the story	
3	Story Structure: Problem, Action, Result	Map the story using a problem/action/result organizer	
4	Earth as a Proper Noun	Explore when "earth" is capitalized and why; common vs. proper nouns	
5	How / Why / When / Where	Expand kernel sentence "Turtle brought up the earth" using how, why, when, and where	
6	Mental Images	Read new myth; pause to sketch or describe mental images while reading	"Traveling to Form the World" — Hamilton, Blackfoot
7	Strong Verbs	Identify Old Man's creation verbs; replace weak verbs with stronger ones	
8	Sequence and Transition Words	Retell the story using transition words: first, then, next, after, finally, as a result	
9	The Woman and the Stone	Discuss the ending; opinion writing: was the woman's choice fair?	
10	Compare the Two Myths	How is land created differently in each story? Use at least two specific details from each text	Both Hamilton myths
11	Read and Respond: Hi'iaka	Read the myth; describe how characters are connected to the landscape	"Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao" — Sanchez, Hawaiian
12	Character Study: Hi'iaka	Map her powers, her quest, and her relationships; strong verbs from the text	
13	Love and Landscape	How does the natural world reflect the relationship? Queer mythology discussion	
14	Earth Myth Comparison Chart	Compare all three myths across key story elements	All three texts
15	Essential Question and Thesis	Draft a thesis in response to the essential question	All texts
16	Brainstorm: Choose a Myth to Retell	Choose one myth; pick a character; brainstorm what changes	Learner's choice
17	Plan the Retelling	Use a story organizer to plan beginning, middle, and end	Learner's brainstorm

18	Draft the Retelling	Write the first draft; use strong verbs and sequence words	Learner's plan
19	Editing: Strong Verbs Pass	Revise for strong verbs; check mechanics with checklist	Learner's draft
20	Publish	Write final copy; reflect on the unit	Edited draft

LESSON 1 | PREDICTING AND READING

OBJECTIVE Learners make predictions based on a title and then read the myth, noticing what surprised them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea" — Virginia Hamilton (In the Beginning)
- Learner workbook (Lesson 1 pages)
- Pencil or pen

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Before reading, ask: "What do you think happens in a story called 'Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea'? Who do you think the main character is?" Give your learner a moment to write their predictions in the workbook.
- Read "Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea" aloud together. This is a rich story with several characters: Earth Starter, Turtle, Pehe-ipe, and Coyote. Pause after each major event to check in.
- After reading, return to the prediction page. Were they right? What surprised them? Let the learner talk through their reaction before writing.
- Close with a discussion of the reflection question: what is one thing from this story you want to remember or think more about?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Why do you think Earth Starter needs Turtle to dive for him? Why can't the creator do it himself?
- Pehe-ipe is in the raft from the very beginning but the story never really explains who he is. Why do you think Hamilton included him?
- Coyote shows up later in the story and tells the first lie. What does that tell you about the kind of story this is?

CAREGIVER TIP This story has more characters than it might seem at first. If your learner gets confused, take a moment to list the characters on scratch paper: Earth Starter, Turtle, Pehe-ipe, Coyote. Tracking who is who makes the rest of the lessons easier.

SCIENCE CONNECTION (S2S Prehistory) In this myth, the earth rises from the bottom of the ocean. What do scientists say about how land actually forms? Connect this to what learners know from S2S about plate tectonics and the early earth.

LESSON 2 | IMPORTANT NOUNS AND VERBS

OBJECTIVE Learners review the parts of speech and identify the most important nouns and verbs in the story.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea" — Hamilton
- Learner workbook (Lesson 2 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Review: a noun is a person, place, thing, or idea. A verb is an action or a state of being. Ask your learner to give you one example of each from any story they know.
- Re-read the myth together or ask your learner to skim it. Their task is to find three nouns and three verbs that feel really important, not just any noun or verb, but the ones that matter most to the story.
- Complete the tables in the workbook. For each noun: why does it matter? For each verb: what does it tell us about the action?
- Close with the Think About It question: do the verbs in this story feel powerful or gentle? What does that say about the kind of story it is?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Why did you pick those three nouns? Could someone else pick completely different ones and still be right?
- What is the most important verb in this whole story? What would happen to the story if you took that verb out?
- Is 'earth' a noun, a verb, or something else in this story? Does it change depending on how it is used?

CAREGIVER TIP Learners sometimes pick the first nouns and verbs they find rather than thinking about importance. Prompt them: "Is that the most important one, or just the first one you saw?" Getting them to defend their choices is where the learning happens.

SCIENCE CONNECTION (S2S Prehistory) The verb "dive" is central to this myth. In science, we also talk about things that dive or sink, like tectonic plates. How does physical movement, diving, sinking, pushing, create the landscape?

LESSON 3 | STORY STRUCTURE: PROBLEM, ACTION, RESULT

OBJECTIVE Learners map the story using a problem/action/result organizer rather than a simple beginning/middle/end.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea" — Hamilton
- Learner workbook (Lesson 3 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Introduce the organizer: every story has a problem (something that needs to be solved), an action (what someone does about it), and a result (what happens because of that action). This is different from beginning/middle/end because it asks why things happen, not just what happens.
- Work through the organizer together. The problem: there is no land, only water. The action: Turtle dives and brings up a tiny bit of earth. The result: the earth grows and the world is formed.
- After completing the organizer, discuss the Digging Deeper question: Turtle is not the most powerful character, but Turtle does the most important work. What does that mean?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What was the problem at the start of this story? How does the problem get solved?
- Who takes the most important action in this story? Is that person the most powerful character?
- The result of Turtle's dive is the entire world. Does the result feel proportionate to the action? Why or why not?

CAREGIVER TIP The problem/action/result frame is more analytical than beginning/middle/end. If your learner defaults to just retelling the plot, gently redirect: "That's what happened. But what was the problem that needed solving?"

LESSON 4 | EARTH AS A PROPER NOUN

OBJECTIVE Learners explore common vs. proper nouns using the word 'earth' as the anchor example.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea" — Hamilton
- Learner workbook (Lesson 4 pages)
- Colored pencils (optional)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Review the rules: a common noun names any person, place, thing, or idea (not capitalized unless starting a sentence). A proper noun names a specific person, place, or thing (always capitalized).
- Open to the Turtle Dives story. Ask: How many ways does Hamilton use the word 'earth' in this story? Sometimes it means dirt. Sometimes it is part of a proper name: Earth Starter.
- Discuss: When does 'earth' become 'Earth'? The moment it becomes a name or title, it becomes a proper noun. The same word can be common or proper depending on how it is used.
- Complete the Fix the Nouns activity in the workbook. Then discuss the Think About It question.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Can you think of other words that can be either common or proper depending on how they are used? (Sun, Moon, Earth, Nature)
- Hamilton capitalizes 'Earth Starter' because it is a name. Do you think she is treating the earth itself as special in this story? Find evidence.
- Why do we capitalize proper nouns at all? What does capitalization signal to a reader?

CAREGIVER TIP This lesson connects directly to Unit 1's capitalization work but pushes deeper into the common/proper distinction. If your learner remembers the Unit 1 discussion of why Hamilton capitalizes 'Nothing,' invite that connection here.

LESSON 5 | HOW / WHY / WHEN / WHERE

OBJECTIVE Learners use the how/why/when/where sentence expansion strategy to build more detailed, informative sentences.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Turtle Dives to the Bottom of the Sea" — Hamilton
- Learner workbook (Lesson 5 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Introduce the strategy: a kernel sentence is a complete but bare sentence. "Turtle brought up the earth." is true, but it leaves out almost everything interesting. We can expand it by asking how, why, when, and where.
- Work through the four questions together first orally, then have your learner write their answers in the workbook.
- For the final activity, ask your learner to combine at least two of the four answers into one or two richer sentences. Model it first: "After six years underwater, Turtle finally surfaced with just a tiny scraping of earth under her nails, enough for Earth Starter to shape the whole world."

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Which of the four questions, how, why, when, where, gave you the most information? Which was hardest to answer from the text?
- Compare your expanded sentence to the original kernel: 'Turtle brought up the earth.' What does the expanded version do that the kernel cannot?
- Is there any information the story does NOT give us? What questions can't we answer from the text?

CAREGIVER TIP The how/why/when/where strategy appears in Unit 1 with the Genesis kernel sentence. If your learner has already practiced this, remind them of that connection and challenge them to write an even more detailed expansion this time.

SCIENCE CONNECTION (S2S Prehistory) Turtle was gone for six years before returning with earth. Scientists estimate the earth took hundreds of millions of years to cool and form solid land. What is the relationship between the myth's six years and the scientific timeline?

LESSON 6 | MENTAL IMAGES

OBJECTIVE Learners read a new myth and pause to visualize what they are picturing, building the habit of active reading.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Traveling to Form the World" — Virginia Hamilton (In the Beginning)
- Learner workbook (Lesson 6 pages)
- Pencil and optional colored pencils

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Before reading, explain the strategy: good readers make pictures in their minds as they read. Today we are going to stop twice and capture those pictures, either by sketching or by describing what we see.
- Read "Traveling to Form the World" aloud together. Stop after the first paragraph and ask: What do you see? Where is Old Man? What does the land around him look like? Give your learner a moment to sketch or describe.
- Continue reading. Stop again when Old Man lies down on the hill and outlines himself with stones. Ask: What does that look like? Can you picture it?
- After finishing, complete the After Reading prompt: what did this whole story look like in your mind?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What did you picture when Old Man first appeared? Was he big or small? Young or old? How did you decide?
- Old Man outlines himself with stones on a hill. Those stones are described as still being there today. How does that detail change the story for you?
- Which scene in this story was easiest to picture? Which was hardest?

CAREGIVER TIP Some learners resist sketching because they feel they cannot draw well. Remind them the sketch is just for them, it is a thinking tool, not artwork. Stick figures and arrows are fine. What matters is the act of stopping to visualize.

SCIENCE CONNECTION (S2S Prehistory) Old Man travels north, making prairies, mountains, rivers, and waterfalls as he goes. Scientists call the process of land being shaped over time by movement and force 'tectonics.' What connections can your learner draw between Old Man's journey and how land actually forms?

LESSON 7 | STRONG VERBS

OBJECTIVE Learners identify strong, precise verbs in the Blackfoot myth and practice replacing weak verbs with stronger ones.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Traveling to Form the World" — Hamilton
- Learner workbook (Lesson 7 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Introduce the concept: a strong verb is specific and vivid. It shows exactly what is happening. Weak verbs (went, made, put, got) leave the reader doing too much guessing.
- Look at the Blackfoot story together. Old Man does not just 'go' or 'make' things. He forms, shapes, presses, stumbles, raises, climbs. Collect five of his creation verbs together.
- For each verb, discuss: what is Old Man doing? Why is this verb stronger than a simpler word?
- Complete the Swap the Verb activity. This is the most important part: replacing weak verbs and noticing how the sentence changes.
- Close with the Think About It question: does Old Man feel more or less powerful when you use stronger verbs?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is the difference between 'made' and 'formed'? Between 'went' and 'crossed'?
- Why do you think Old Man's verbs are so physical in this story? What does that tell us about how the Blackfoot tradition sees creation?
- Compare Old Man's verbs to Turtle's verbs from Lesson 2. Who has the more physical, active verbs? What does that difference suggest?

CAREGIVER TIP Strong verbs are the writing skill that carries through the most directly into the retelling project at the end of the unit. If your learner starts collecting strong verbs now, they will have a bank to draw from in Lessons 16 through 20.

LESSON 8 | SEQUENCE AND TRANSITION WORDS

OBJECTIVE Learners use transition words to retell the story in order and begin using cause-and-effect transitions as well as time-order ones.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Traveling to Form the World" — Hamilton
- Learner workbook (Lesson 8 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Review: transition words help readers understand the order of events and how events connect. There are two main kinds: time order (first, then, next, finally) and cause-and-effect (as a result, because of this, therefore).
- Look at the transition words table in the workbook together. Discuss the difference: time-order transitions say WHEN something happened. Cause-and-effect transitions say WHY the next thing happened.
- Ask your learner to retell the Blackfoot myth in writing using at least four different transition words. Remind them to underline each one so you can both see them.
- For the Digging Deeper activity, pick one moment from the myth and ask: how does it change when you use 'as a result' instead of 'then'?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is the difference between 'then' and 'as a result'? Try using each in a sentence about this myth.
- Is Old Man's creation of the world a sequence of events, or is it more of a cause-and-effect chain? Can both be true?
- Which transition words feel most natural for this story? Which feel forced?

CAREGIVER TIP Learners often default to 'first, then, next, finally' without thinking about whether those words are doing real work. Push them to use at least one cause-and-effect transition, even if it feels harder. That is where the real analytical thinking begins.

LESSON 9 | THE WOMAN AND THE STONE

OBJECTIVE Learners discuss the ending of the Blackfoot myth and practice forming and supporting an opinion.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Traveling to Form the World" — Hamilton
- Learner workbook (Lesson 9 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Re-read the ending of the story together: Old Man throws the buffalo chip (it floats), then the woman throws the stone (it sinks). Old Man says: 'So, you have chosen.'
- Ask: What just happened? Why does it matter that the stone sank instead of floated? Make sure your learner understands the stakes before moving to the opinion activity.
- In the workbook, learners take a position: was the woman's choice fair? Remind them there is no wrong answer, but they need at least two reasons.
- Close with the Digging Deeper question: what does Old Man's reaction tell us? Does he seem surprised? Angry? Resigned?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Do you think the woman knew what would happen when she threw the stone?
- Old Man already threw the buffalo chip, which floated. Why does the woman get a throw too? Who set up those rules?
- Hamilton's note says 'woman is the spoiler' in this story. Do you agree with that interpretation? How would you describe her?

CAREGIVER TIP This is the most emotionally and morally complex lesson in the unit. The woman is choosing death for all of humanity, and the story accepts it without dramatic judgment. Let your learner sit with that discomfort. There is no need to rush toward a resolution.

LESSON 10 | COMPARE THE TWO MYTHS

OBJECTIVE Learners compare the Maidu and Blackfoot earth-forming myths, using specific details from each text.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Both Hamilton myths
- Learner workbook (Lesson 10 pages)
- Sticky notes or tabs to mark key passages

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Place both texts side by side or have tabs marking the key passages.
- Work through the comparison table together. How is land created? Who does the creating? Is there a helper? What does the land feel like at the end?
- After filling in the table, move to the Observations with Evidence section. Each observation needs a detail from the text to back it up. Model this: 'In the Maidu story, land comes from below the water, while in the Blackfoot story, land is shaped from above. I know this because Hamilton writes that Turtle dove to the bottom of the ocean, but Old Man's creation happens as he walks across the surface.'
- Close with the What Do They Share question. Even very different stories often agree on something important.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- In the Maidu story, land comes from below. In the Blackfoot story, land is shaped from above. What does each approach suggest about how that culture saw the earth?
- Both stories have a creator who needs help. What does it mean that neither creator can make the world alone?
- If you had to say which culture valued land more in their story, which would you choose? How would you defend that claim?

CAREGIVER TIP Citing evidence is a skill learners often resist because it interrupts the flow of their argument. Remind them: 'You said that. Now show me where in the book it says that.' This habit will serve them throughout their education.

LESSON 11 | READ AND RESPOND: HI'IAKA

OBJECTIVE Learners read the Hawaiian myth and describe how the characters are connected to the landscape.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao Seek Superheroic Adventure" — Guido A. Sanchez (Queer Mythology)
- Learner workbook (Lesson 11 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Before reading, briefly introduce context: Hi'iaka is a real and important figure in Hawaiian tradition, the sister of Pele (the volcano goddess). Sanchez's retelling centers her as a superhero and tells the story of her love for Wahine-Omao. The Hawaiian Islands were formed by volcanic activity, and that geography is woven through this story.
- Read "Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao" aloud together. This story has a more modern, energetic voice than the Hamilton myths. Let your learner react to that difference.
- Complete the First Response and Characters and Landscape sections in the workbook.
- Close with the Think About It question: in the Hamilton myths, land is being created. In this story, land already exists. How does that change things?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- How is this story different in voice and tone from the two Hamilton myths? What does that difference feel like?
- Hi'iaka is described as a Kapua, a magical entity related closely to the gods. How does that affect how you read her as a character?
- The land in this story is already formed. What role does the landscape play if it is not being created?

CAREGIVER TIP Some learners may be surprised by the modern, superhero-style voice of the Sanchez text. That contrast is actually valuable: it opens a conversation about how the same mythological tradition can be told in many different ways across time.

SCIENCE CONNECTION (S2S Prehistory) The Hawaiian Islands were formed by a volcanic hotspot in the Pacific Plate. Pele is the goddess of volcanoes, and Hi'iaka is her sister. How does the geological reality of Hawaii connect to what this myth describes?

LESSON 12 | CHARACTER STUDY: HI'IAKA

OBJECTIVE Learners map Hi'iaka's powers, quest, and relationships, and identify strong verbs from the text.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao" — Sanchez
- Learner workbook (Lesson 12 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Re-read key sections of the story together: the description of Hi'iaka's powers, her agreement with Pele, her gifts (eye of foresight, powerful arms and legs, skirt of lightning), and her relationship with Wahine-Omao.
- Work through the Character Map in the workbook: her powers and gifts, her quest, her relationship with Pele, her relationship with Wahine-Omao.
- For the Strong Verbs activity, look at the Sanchez text the same way you looked at the Hamilton text in Lesson 7. What verbs does Sanchez use to describe what Hi'iaka does? Are they as physical as Old Man's verbs?
- Close with the Think About It question: is 'superhero' a good description for Hi'iaka?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Hi'iaka is given three gifts by Pele. Which of the three do you think is most important? Why?
- How is Hi'iaka's relationship with Pele complicated? What does she agree to do, and what does she ask in return?
- Compare Hi'iaka to Earth Starter and Old Man. What do all three creators have in common? How are they different?

CAREGIVER TIP The character map in this lesson is more complex than what learners have done before because Hi'iaka has multiple significant relationships. Take time with each quadrant. The relationships are as important as the powers.

LESSON 13 | LOVE AND LANDSCAPE

OBJECTIVE Learners examine how the natural world reflects Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao's relationship, and discuss the story as a queer love story.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao" — Sanchez
- Learner workbook (Lesson 13 pages)

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Re-read the sections of the story that describe Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao's growing relationship and the moments where their feelings connect to the landscape.
- Work through the Nature and Love Tracker in the workbook. For each moment, discuss: what are the characters feeling, and what is the landscape doing?
- Complete the Write About It section: what does it mean that Hi'iaka can reach Wahine-Omao through lava and forest?
- Then move to the Queer Mythology: Think About It section. Read the framing text aloud together. Give your learner space to think before writing.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Sanchez writes that their love 'transcended space and time.' What does that phrase mean to you?
- Why do you think Sanchez chose to make the landscape, the lava and the forest, the way Hi'iaka communicates her love?
- What does it mean that a story this old includes a love like Hi'iaka and Wahine-Omao's? What does that tell us about the people who told it?

CAREGIVER TIP This lesson works best when you approach the queer mythology discussion with genuine curiosity rather than a predetermined conclusion. Your learner's thinking about love and story matters more than arriving at a particular answer. If your family has personal beliefs connected to this topic, frame it the same way you would any other mythological discussion: we are exploring what stories tell us about the people who told them.

LESSON 14 | EARTH MYTH COMPARISON CHART

OBJECTIVE Learners synthesize all three myths by building a comparative chart across key story elements.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- All three texts
- Learner workbook (Lesson 14 pages)
- Notes from previous lessons

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Explain the goal: we have now read three earth-forming myths from three different cultures. This lesson is about stepping back and seeing the big picture.
- Open the chart in the workbook. Work through each column together, flipping back to original texts as needed. Single words and phrases are fine in the chart cells.
- After completing the chart, ask the What Do You Notice questions. What do all three myths have in common? What surprised you most?
- This chart will serve as the evidence bank for Lesson 15.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What do all three myths agree on about the relationship between people and the land?
- Which culture's earth myth feels most familiar to you? Which feels most different?
- If you were going to add a fourth row to this chart, what would it ask? What else do you want to know?

CAREGIVER TIP Don't worry if some cells in the chart are left blank. Some myths simply don't address certain questions. Recognizing absence is also a form of analysis.

LESSON 15 | ESSENTIAL QUESTION AND THESIS

OBJECTIVE Learners construct a thesis statement in response to the unit's essential question, drawing on all three myths.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Learner's Comparison Chart (Lesson 14)
- Learner workbook (Lesson 15 pages)
- Essential question posted visibly

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Post the essential question where your learner can see it: Why do so many stories say the earth rose up from the water, and what does that tell us about the people telling them?
- Discuss: Have we answered this question yet? What have we learned that helps us answer it? Look at the comparison chart together.
- Work toward a thesis: one sentence that answers the essential question and makes a claim someone could disagree with.
- Write two thesis attempts and choose the stronger one together. A thesis is an argument, not a fact. If no one could disagree with it, it is not a thesis yet.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What claim are you making in your thesis? Could someone disagree with it?
- Which myths from our reading support your thesis best?
- If your thesis is true, what does it tell us about all humans everywhere?

CAREGIVER TIP A thesis statement is an argument, not a fact. If your learner writes 'Many cultures have earth myths,' ask: 'Who would disagree with that?' If no one would disagree, it is not a thesis yet. Push toward a claim with a specific argument.

LESSON 16 | BRAINSTORM: CHOOSE A MYTH TO RETELL

OBJECTIVE Learners choose a myth and a character or angle for their retelling project and begin generating ideas.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Learner workbook (Lesson 16 pages)
- All three texts available for reference

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Explain the project: for the final four lessons, learners will retell one of the three myths from a different character's perspective or a different angle.
- Discuss the options together. Turtle Dives has Pehe-ipe, a mysterious character who is never explained. Traveling to Form the World has the woman, whose inner life we never see. Hi'iaka has Pau-o-Palai, who departs midway and whose own adventure is never told.
- Once a myth and character are chosen, work through the brainstorm questions. What does this character see, think, and feel that the original story doesn't show us?
- Keep this loose and generative. There are no wrong ideas at this stage.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Why did you choose this myth and character? What is interesting about their perspective?
- What do you know about this character from the original story? What does the story leave unsaid?
- What will stay the same in your version? What will change?

CAREGIVER TIP Encourage bold ideas at this stage. A learner who wants to retell Turtle's dive from the perspective of the earth itself at the bottom of the ocean should run with it. Originality makes the writing more enjoyable and more memorable.

LESSON 17 | PLAN THE RETELLING

OBJECTIVE Learners map out the beginning, middle, and end of their retelling.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Learner workbook (Lesson 17 pages)
- Brainstorm notes from Lesson 16

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Review the brainstorm notes from Lesson 16.
- Work through the Story Organizer: Beginning (where is your character and what is happening?), Middle (what is the main event from their perspective?), End (how does your story end and what has changed?).
- Then complete the Strong Verbs Plan: before drafting, brainstorm at least five strong verbs to use. Having them ready before writing makes the drafting stage less daunting.
- Read the completed organizer aloud. Does the story make sense? Is anything missing?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What part of your plan are you most excited to write?
- Is there anything in your plan that feels unclear or underdeveloped? What does it need?
- Which strong verbs feel right for your character and story?

CAREGIVER TIP The story organizer is a map, not a contract. Remind your learner that the story can change as they write. The purpose of the organizer is to get started, not to lock in every decision.

LESSON 18 | DRAFT THE RETELLING

OBJECTIVE Learners write the first draft of their retelling using their plan and strong verbs.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Learner workbook (Lesson 18 pages)
- Notes from Lessons 16 and 17
- Strong verbs and sequence word reference in the workbook

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Remind your learner: this is a DRAFT. The goal is to get the story on the page. We will revise in Lesson 19.
- Ask them to use at least three strong verbs from their plan and at least two sequence words.
- If your learner gets stuck, ask: what happens next in your organizer? Or offer to scribe for a moment while they narrate.
- When finished, have your learner read the draft aloud. Reading aloud catches missing words and unclear sentences before the revision stage.
- Do not correct anything yet. That is Lesson 19's work.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Read me your favorite sentence from your draft. What do you like about it?
- Is there anything in your story that feels unclear to you?
- Does your version feel different from the original myth? In what way?

CAREGIVER TIP If your learner resists drafting, try a timed write: ten minutes, just get it on the page. Removing the pressure of perfection by making time the focus often frees reluctant writers.

LESSON 19 | EDITING: STRONG VERBS PASS

OBJECTIVE Learners revise their draft with a specific focus on strong verbs, then check mechanics.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Learner's draft from Lesson 18
- Learner workbook (Lesson 19 pages, revision checklist)
- Colored pencil or pen

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Start with the Strong Verbs Check. Ask your learner to find three verbs in their draft and write them in the table. For each one: is it strong enough? Is there a more specific or vivid option?
- Make the verb changes directly on the draft in a different color so you can both see what changed.
- Then move through the Revision Checklist together. Check each item: beginning/middle/end, perspective, vivid landscape detail, complete sentences, capitalization, punctuation.
- Read the revised draft aloud one final time. How does it sound now?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What verb did you change? How does the sentence feel different now?
- Is there a sentence in your draft that you are really proud of? What makes it work?
- What would you do differently if you were starting this story from scratch?

CAREGIVER TIP Praise specific improvements rather than general effort. 'I love how you changed 'walked' to 'pressed through' — I can really feel Old Man's weight on the land now' is more useful than 'great job.'

LESSON 20 | PUBLISH

OBJECTIVE Learners write a clean, final copy of their retelling and reflect on the unit.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Edited draft from Lesson 19
- Learner workbook (Lesson 20 pages)
- Pencil, pen, or colored pencils

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

- Explain what publishing means: making a final, clean copy that is ready to share with a reader.
- Have your learner copy their edited draft onto the final copy page. Encourage neat, careful handwriting or typing if preferred.
- Once finished, add a title and the author's name.
- Optional: illustrate with one or two drawings that show a scene from the retelling.
- Celebrate. Read the finished retelling aloud to someone. This story is now part of a tradition that stretches back thousands of years.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What title did you choose for your retelling? What does it tell the reader?
- If someone read your retelling a hundred years from now, what would they learn about you from it?
- Looking back at the whole unit, which of the three earth myths was your favorite, and why?

CAREGIVER TIP Make this feel like a real celebration. Even a small ceremony, reading aloud at dinner or displaying on the fridge, signals to your learner that their work matters and is worth sharing.

SOURCES

- Hamilton, V. (Ed.). (1991). In the beginning: Creation stories from around the world. Harcourt. (Original work published 1988)
- Sanchez, G. A. (2024). Queer mythology: Epic legends from around the world. Running Press Kids.
- Hochman, J. C., & Wexler, N. (2024). The writing revolution 2.0. Jossey-Bass.
- National Geographic Society. (2023). Plate tectonics. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/plate-tectonics/>
- Bishop Museum. (n.d.). Hi'iaka-i-ka-poli-o-Pele. Bishop Museum Hawaiian Cultural Resource.
- Britannica Editors. (2023). Maidu. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maidu>
- Britannica Editors. (2023). Blackfoot. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Blackfoot-people>