

3.5 Creation Stories from around the World: Which version is true?

Instructions: In the book, *In the Beginning, Creation Stories from Around the World*, Virginia Hamilton retells stories from different cultures where people explain their beliefs about the origins of the world of humankind. Read the five excerpts below from Hamilton's book and answer the following questions.

Questions

1. In what ways are these stories similar? How do you explain these similarities?
2. Which story comes closest to your own religious beliefs? Explain.
3. In your opinion, why did people tell these stories about human origins and the formation of the world?

A. Raven the Creator as told by the Inuit people of Greenland

The first man still lay inside the pea pod. Four days passed, and on the fifth day, he pushed with his feet. He broke through the bottom of the pod and fell to the ground. Raven changed into a man. He walked around first man to get a good look at him. "I made that vine!" said Raven. "I never thought something like you would come from it." Raven made more animals, moved his wings, and brought them to life. He made a figure out of clay much like Man's, although different. When the figure had dried in the palm of his hand, he waved his wings several times. It came to life. It was a lovely woman. She got up, grew up, and stood beside Man (3-7).

B. Phan Ku the Creator as told in China about 600 BC

Phan Ku burst from the egg. He was the first being. He was the Great Creator. Phan Ku was the size of a giant. He grew ten feet a day and lived for eighteen thousand years. Phan Ku separated sky from earth. He chiseled out the earth's rivers. Phan Ku placed the stars and moon in the night sky and the sun into the day. Only when Phan Ku died was the earth at last complete. The dome of the sky was made from Phan Ku's skull. Soil was formed from his body. Rain was made from his sweat. And from the fleas that lived in the hair covering him came all of humankind (21-23).

C. Divine Woman the Creator as told by the Huron people of North America

A woman fell from a torn place in the sky. She was a divine woman, full of power. The animals decided the woman needed earth to live on. Turtle said, "Dive down in the water and bring up some earth." The woman took it and put it all around on Turtle's shell. That was the start of the earth. Dry land grew until it formed a country, then another country, and all of earth. To this day, Turtle holds up the earth (59-63).

D. Olorun the Creator as told by the Yoruba people of Nigeria

Olorun, Owner of the Sky, and the Highest Being, call the chief of the divine ones to him. This chief was Great God. Olorun told Great God, "I want you to make some firm ground down below." He gave Great God a shell. There was a small amount of earth in the shell. Great God did as he was told. He went down to the marsh land, sliding down the spider silks. Then he threw the earth out of the shell and spread it about him. He put the pigeon and the hen on the bit of the earth from the shell. The pigeon and the hen began scratching and scratching the earth with their feet. That was how the firm, hard ground came to be. The first people came down from heaven. Olorun sent them down to earth to live (73-77).

E. Yahweh the Creator as described in the Judeo-Christian Book of Genesis

Yahweh, the Lord God, made the earth and heavens. Then the Lord God formed man out of dust from the ground, and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air. The Lord God took one of Adam's ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The rib which the Lord God had taken from Adam He formed into Eve (123-125).