

How TOTSUWA Became Cherokee

TEACHER'S NOTES

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE: K-5

Text for teacher's notes kindly provided by Wade Blevins, language specialist and citizen of Cherokee Nation.

ASK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT KEY DETAILS IN A TEXT

Using both the text and the illustrations, please answer the following questions -

SETTING

What do you think is the setting of the story? Is it a city? A Desert? In the Mountains?
What details from the story or the illustrations tell us where the story takes place?
What are some special places named in the story? Have you ever visited any of these places?
What places in your own surroundings are special to you? Why are they special?

CHARACTER

Who is the main character of the story?
Who are some of the characters in the story that help him?
Does the main character change during the story? In what way?
Have you changed from when you were a baby to now? In what ways?

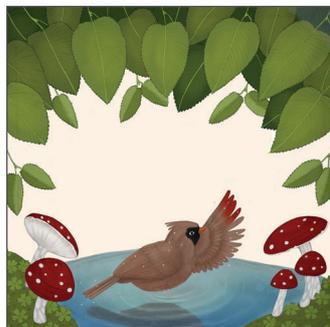
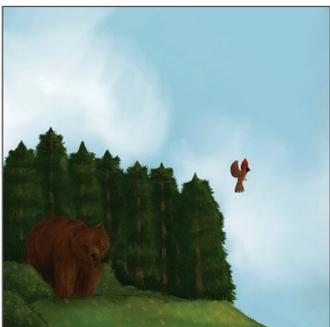
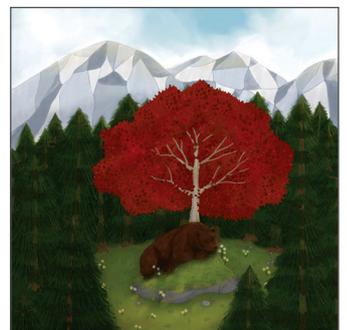
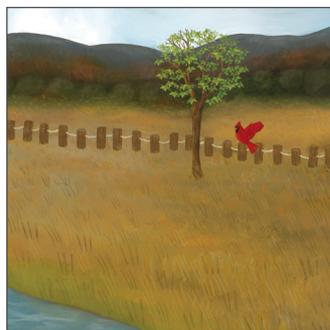
PROBLEM

What is the problem in the story?
How do you think the main character felt about the problem in the beginning?
Were his feelings different at the end?
How did the other characters in the story help the main character with the problem?
Do you like change? Why or why not?

EVENTS/EPISODES

Here are some events that happened in the story. Put them in the order of how they happened in the story. (Accompany the sentences with pictures).

1. Kanesegi the Spider takes Totsuwa to Water.
2. Totsuwa returns home to his grandfather.
3. Totsuwa drinks from the spring at Red Clay.
4. Totsuwa finds Yona at Clingman's Dome.
5. Totsuwa travels to Kituwa.
6. Yona and Totsuwa travel to Atagahi, the Magic Lake.
7. Totsuwa noticed a spot on his wing.
8. Totsuwa's grandfather tells him to visit Yona.



ENDING/SOLUTION

How did Totsuwa solve his problem?
How did his solution make him feel?



ACTIVITIES

THEMES

Some common themes in stories are:

- Differences
- Change
- Good vs. Evil
- Love and Friendship
- Growing up
- Rules
- Goals and Dreams
- Bravery and Fear

Working in pairs or singly, choose a theme that is NOT shown in the story. Next, come up with your own story using one or more characters from the story that include this theme. Here are some ideas you can use if you wish:

Differences:

Totsuwa meets Kananesti the Spider and notices that she looks different on the outside, but they share many similarities that can't be seen.

Good vs. Evil:

Totsuwa has a brother also going through the same changes. However, while Totsuwa is polite to the helpers they meet and easily goes through the changes with the help of his new friends, his brother is not nice to the helpers and struggles to succeed.





SYNONYMS

Replace the underlined words or phrase in the following sentences taken from the story with a word that means the same thing (synonym). A list of synonyms has been provided for you.

Grown	Find	Near	Sleeping	Assist
Brief	Carefully	Leave	Chilly	Trip

ex. -One day while taking a bath in the river One day while washing in the river.

1. “It is time for you to take a journey to the East”

“It is time for you to take a _____ to the East”

2. He found Yona, the Bear, taking a nap under a big oak tree.

He found Yona, the Bear, _____ under a big oak tree.

3. Totsuwa gingerly crept over to Yona

Totsuwa _____ crept over to Yona

4. You are starting the journey to discover who you are.

You are starting the journey to _____ who you are.

5. Totsuwa bathed in the cool mountain water.

Totsuwa bathed in the _____ mountain water.

6. He noticed the red spot on his wing had spread

He noticed the red spot on his wing had _____

7. She will help you.

She will _____ you.





8. He watched him fly away.

He watched him _____.

9. After a short flight

After a _____ flight

10. There, in a tree by the river,

There, in a tree _____ the river,





PUNCTUATION

Find an example in the story that shows the following things:

An example where the character is excited. _____

What clues show us that the character is excited? _____

An example where a character is asking a question. _____

What punctuation shows us that a question is being asked? _____

An example that shows what someone in the story is saying. _____

What clues tell us, the reader, that a character is speaking? _____





COMPARING AND CONTRASTING CULTURES

SACRED

The word Sacred means something that holds a special significance for a particular culture, especially in their religious beliefs. Some sacred things are easy to see, but some are less obvious. Today, we will look at numbers and repetition in both Cherokee culture and European culture.

Let's take the story "Totsuwa" and look at numbers and repetition.

How many times did Totsuwa go under the water at Kituwa? (7)

How many characters are in the story? Let's name them.

1. Totsuwa
2. Grandfather
3. Yona
4. Kananesgi

How many places did Totsuwa visit? Let's list them.

1. Clingman's Dome (Kuwayo)
2. Magic Lake (Atagahi)
3. Kituwah
4. Red Clay (Elawodii)

Both the numbers 4 and 7 are considered sacred, or special, in Cherokee culture.

Let's look at a common European story many people know: The Three Little Pigs.

How many pigs are in the story? 3

How many types of home did the pigs make? 3

What does the big, bad wolf say he will do to the homes? I will huff (1) and I'll puff (2) and I'll blow your house down (3)

So, based on this common story, what number can we hypothesize is sacred in European culture? Can we find other stories that also focus on the number 3?

(Three Blind Mice
Goldilocks and the Three Bears
The Three Billy Goats Gruff)

Activity: Look at the 2 following short stories. Based on what we know about numbers, decide which story is Cherokee in origin, and which comes from Europe.





THE FOX RACES THE CRAYFISH

A long time ago, all animals could talk together.

One day, the crawdad was walking around in the mud near the water.

A fox was sitting nearby.

They started to talk together.

The fox asked if the crawdad was as fast on land as he was in the water.

The crawdad said he was.

The fox did not believe him, so they decided to race.

They decided to run across 7 hills. Whoever reached the 7th one first will whoop.

The one who whoops first will be the winner.

They went to the top of a high mountain. They chose the 7 hills where they would run.

When the race started, the crawdad was slow to start. The fox passed him. When the fox's tail went past the crawdad, he grabbed the very end of the tail and got up.

The fox ran as fast as he could. The crawdad rode the fox's tail. When they got to the 7th hill, the fox whooped and there beside him, the crawdad whooped too.

The fox was surprised that the crawdad could keep up. He asked the crawdad to run again.

So they turned around and raced back to the mountain where they had started from.

About halfway through the race, the fox turned fast and the crawdad nearly fell off, so he took a firmer grip on the fox's tail. When he did this, he accidentally grabbed the bony part of the tail. The fox arrived at the 7th hill and whooped and, at the same time, the crawdad whooped too.

The fox accused the crawdad of cheating. The crawdad denied that he had cheated, but the fox told him that he had felt him grab his tail.

The fox chased him round and round. The crawdad couldn't escape, and the fox ate him.

(Cherokee)





THE THREE AUNTS

A girl had to go into service, where the queen liked her so much that the other servants, envious, claimed she had said she could spin a pound of flax in a day, and the queen insisted that she actually do it, even though she couldn't spin. An old woman came and did it for her in exchange for being an Honorary Aunt at her wedding.

The servants claimed she said she could weave it in a day, and the queen insisted, but another old woman helped her.

The servants claimed she could sew it up in a day, and the queen insisted again, but another old woman helped her.

The queen was pleased with her skill and had her marry the prince because she would not need to hire women to do such work. The three old women came to the wedding feast and were, by daylight, hideously ugly, but the girl called them each Auntie, and they got to sit at the feast. The prince asked why his pretty bride had such ugly aunts, and they explained they had been as pretty as her once, but their endless spinning, weaving, and sewing had ruined their looks. The prince promptly forbade her to do these things ever again.