Old Man Stories
Authentic Stories from the Chippewa, Cree and Blackfeet

Teaching Guide

“We always laugh when we speak of Old Man...He expects it and laughs with us from the past.”

Chief Panatoo, Chippewa Storyteller

Stories collected and written by Frank B. Linderman
selected and adapted for this series by Mike Peterson

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Introduction

In preparing these stories for serialization, our only major change was to eliminate some scene-setting parts of the stories in which young Indian children would gather at the lodge of the old storyteller.

By cutting straight to the stories themselves, we avoided the need to edit the stories to fit the length of a newspaper serial. This has allowed us to present the stories nearly word-for-word as Linderman’s storyteller told them, preserving his rhythms and word choices.

Language Notes:

In keeping with the preference of most of the people to whom the term applies, we use the word “Indian” throughout these stories. There is nothing wrong with the term “Native American” and we have also used it here or there within the teaching guide, but extensive contact with native people reveals that the more familiar term is considered less politically charged and no less, if perhaps no more, accurate a description of them.

Similarly, we use the term Chippewa rather than Ojibwe because, while they are interchangeable (the “O” in Ojibwe is nearly silent), Chippewa is the form used by the residents of Rocky Boy’s Reservation, where the descendants of Linderman’s contacts now live.
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Who was Frank Linderman?

"I propose to tell what I know of these legends, keeping as near as possible to the Indian's style of story-telling, and using only tales told me by the older men of the Blackfeet, Chippewa, and Cree tribes."

Frank Linderman (1869-1938) came to Montana as a 16-year-old to work as a trapper, hunter and guide in a country that was both growing with the arrival of the white people and dying with the fading of the Northern Plains culture. Linderman made good friends among the newly-arrived Cree and Chippewa who had fled Canada in the wake of the unsuccessful Riel Rebellion of 1885.

Linderman learned their language, as well as sign language, and spent time with them on the reservation lands of the Blackfeet where they had been assigned living space. Though their situation was far from ideal, the newcomers and their hosts got along, and Linderman spent many evenings hearing the folk tales of the Northern Plains, particularly the stories of “Napa,” the trickster-creator known as “Old Man.”

Linderman moved on to other pursuits, including stints in newspapers, real estate and politics. But he never forgot the appeal of those early days and the friends he had made. He produced two biographies of Crow personalities: “Plenty Coups, Chief of the Crows” and “Pretty Shield, a Crow Medicine Woman,” both of which help to preserve not only those individual lives but a record of how people lived in those old days.

Linderman also sought to preserve the stories and the storytelling style of his friends on the Northern Plains, because he realized that the storytellers who wiled away the nights laughing over the exploits of Old Man were beginning to pass from the scene, and that the stories would pass away with them.

He compiled two books of Old Man stories: “The Indian Why Stories” (1915) and “Indian Old-Man Stories” (1920). In these stories, an old man named War Eagle, based on Linderman’s real life friend, the Chippewa holyman Panatoo, gathers children in his lodge to tell them stories of how things came to be the way they are, and of the trickster, clown and creator, Old Man.

But Frank Linderman did more than help to preserve the culture of his friends. He was instrumental in a drive to provide a reservation for “The Landless Ones” as the refugees from Canada were known. Today, the combined Cree/Chippewa tribe lives on Rocky Boy’s Reservation in north-central Montana, where Frank Linderman is warmly remembered as a true friend. A major portion of the proceeds from sales of this serialized version of the Old Man Stories is being donated to Rocky Boy Elementary School, to benefit the children whose stories these are.

(The former hosts of the Cree/Chippewa, the Blackfeet, still live in northwestern Montana, where they, too, actively work to keep their traditions alive.)
**Napa, or “Old Man”**

Old Man, also known as Napa or Napi, is similar to the trickster figure, Coyote, but is more of a creator.

When the flood comes, Old Man not only makes a great raft for all the animals and then remakes the land for them to live upon, but then creates the Chippewa people to dwell upon it, too.

And yet he is a bully, a liar and a fool. He lies to the ducks, attempting to trick them into becoming his next meal. When the coyote comes to help him out of a tight spot, Old Man insults him so much that the infuriated coyote leaves him stuck there. And he forgets Chickadee’s warning and ends up losing his eyes on the dirty, cluttered forest floor.

It is puzzling to a Western mind, but Linderman reports that Old Man must not be confused with Manitou, sometimes called “The Great Spirit.” In his preface to the second collection, “Indian Old Man Stories,” he writes:

> Old Man or Napa created the world and its inhabitants. His mistakes and weaknesses are freely discussed, and the laugh accompanies talks of his doings, but mention Manitou and silence falls upon the merrymakers. Reverential awe replaces gaiety, and you will feel that you are guilty of intended sacrilege.

Linderman goes on to recall a time when he sat, listening respectfully to stories of Old Man, until his friend, Panatoo, noticed his silence.

> “Why does not my brother laugh with us?” asked the old warrior. I had feared to laugh at the stories lest the Indian believe that I was not serious in my desire to learn of this strange, mythical character, and I told him that. “We always laugh when we speak of Old Man,” he said. “You should laugh aloud with us when we speak of him. He expects it and always laughs with us from the past.”

**An educational footnote:** Dr. Sandra Murie, superintendent of schools on the Rocky Boy Reservation, notes that these stories were told during the winter, when the weather and darkness tended to keep people more confined to their homes. It was a good time to contemplate the moral teachings that underlie even the most humorous of these stories. In summer, she says, cultural lessons were passed on less formally as young people interacted with their elders in the course of playing, doing chores or learning the skills they would need as adults.
The Cree, the Chippewa and the Blackfeet

Frank Linderman gathered the Old Man stories from three nations who are at once related and yet quite distinct. The Cree, Chippewa and Blackfeet all speak languages in the Algonquin linguistic family. But Algonquin-speaking nations are found everywhere from the Atlantic to Pacific and as far south as the Carolinas. To say that the three peoples are related is like saying that the Germans are related to the Portuguese and Italians because their languages derive from Latin. It’s true, but it isn’t helpful.

Of these three nations, the Blackfeet may seem the most “typical” Plains Indians. For thousands of years, they lived in tipis, moving to follow the herds of buffalo across the plains. The Cree and Chippewa came to the plains from the east, after the arrival of Europeans, adopting a plains culture after centuries of living more as woodland people in the upper midwest and Canada.

People, of course, do change over time, and it is wrong to think that the native cultures in North America were the same for thousands of years until the Europeans came. However, the changes brought about by colonization often happened before the white people themselves arrived in an area.

Almost all Indian nations west of the Mississippi saw their culture significantly changed by the arrival of the horse in the 17th century, but the effect was most profound on the plains. Although horses did escape and breed in the wild, the actual knowledge of their use was spread through trade. Indians who learned horsemanship from the Spanish in the Southwest became breeders and trainers, spreading their knowledge to the north and east as each nation in turn learned about this wonderful animal. It is ironic that the horse enabled Plains peoples to hunt more efficiently and thus increase their numbers just as Europeans coming from the East brought strange diseases and territorial rivalries that ended up nearly wiping them out.

For the Blackfeet, the horse radically changed the buffalo hunt, as well as the ability to move camp and range more widely to follow the seasons. Meanwhile, the Cree, who had lived in the East and the upper Midwest, were coming West, both in reaction to increased settlement back East and because they were becoming more active in trade with both white fur traders and neighboring tribes. When the Blackfeet and Cree met in the 18th century, they quickly established a trading pattern: The Cree brought guns from the East, the Blackfeet had horses, and their combination made both nations much more able to feed their people and to defend themselves against both Indian and white enemies.

But, while the Blackfeet fit the more familiar pattern of the Plains Indian, living in tepees and following the buffalo herds for thousands of years, the Cree are a very diverse people, and the Cree who told stories to Frank Linderman would have been very different from the Cree who lived around the southern edges of Hudson Bay or down near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River.

Similarly, the Chippewa (or Ojibway) are more commonly associated with the eastern woodlands and the upper midwest, but came to the Northern Plains in the 18th century and established a strong Plains culture and tradition.

The specific bands of Cree and Chippewa whom Linderman met were not wandering because of buffalo herds, however. They had fled Canada in the wake of the Riel Rebellion, in which mixed-race Canadians and Indians attempted to assert their rights in Western Canada against the forces of settlement. Although a small outburst compared to the Indian Wars in the United States, it represents the most significant such conflict in Canada, where relations with what are there called “First Nations” people have been almost exclusively based on treaties rather than armed aggression.
Just as European peoples were changed by contact with each other, major events in their regions and developments in technology, so, too, the peoples of North America changed and adapted over the years. Although the stories of Old Man go back before the coming of the horse and the Europeans, the people who told those stories were a combination of old ways and new. The folk stories collected and preserved by Frank Linderman are, like the German folk stories collected by The Grimm Brothers and the African-American stories collected by Joel Chandler Harris, are a not only a reminder of a time now passed, but an insight into the national identities of the people who told those stories for so many centuries, so many years ago.
**Why Kingfisher Wears A War Bonnet**

**Think About The Story**

1. What did Old Man and the Wolf see at the river?

2. What did Old Man fear would happen if the Wolf ran after the otters?

3. Why did Old Man cry?

4. What did Old Man do when Kingfisher kept laughing?

5. How did Kingfisher’s appearance change?

**Think About The Story**

Kingfisher made Old Man angry by laughing at him when he was sad. How do you feel when someone laughs at you when you are sad?

Why is it dangerous to walk on water covered with ice? What could happen? (Do you know why river ice can be more dangerous than lake ice?)

Old Man was worried about being left alone. Do you sometimes feel frightened when you are alone? What do you do about it?

**Newspaper Activity**

Old Man and the Wolf were so hungry and cold that they didn’t care what they ate, but there are foods that seem better in summer than in winter and vice-versa. Look at the weather page and try to predict what the weather will be like tomorrow at lunchtime. Now look through the ads or recipes in today’s paper for menu ideas that you could use for a picnic. (Now look at the ads and fashion articles for clothing and outdoor items that might make your imaginary picnic more comfortable!)
OTTERS IN WINTER -- AND OTHER ANIMALS (SCIENCE)

Otters remain quite active year round and, as in this story, enjoy playing in the ice and snow. By contrast, frogs are cold-blooded and hibernate so deeply that they've been known to oversleep and miss an entire summer, waking up two springs after burrowing into the mud. And some animals, like squirrels, will become inactive through the worst of the winter but wake up and look for food on sunny winter days. Assign each student an animal to research and have them report back on how their animal spends winter.

The every-risk-you-could-ever-run Web site
http://www.safecanada.ca/link_e.asp?category=13&topic=125
(or http://tinyurl.com/cmjvx)

We intended to include a Web site that would discuss the risks of ice, but came across this irresistible Canadian page, which has kids’ safety sites from around the country. There are a couple of sites dealing with ice safety, and others about things like ATVs, bicycles, bee stings and barbecue grills. And there are a few that may not address issues your kids face, but will certainly spark interesting conversations. For instance: What would you do if there were a bear in your schoolyard? For some communities, it is very possible! And the tips on that downloadable PDF are a fascinating look into bear behavior.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Although Old Man adorned Kingfishers with war-bonnets as a punishment for laughing at him, war-bonnets were actually an indication of honor. You may be most familiar with the Lakota style of head-dress, with feathers that stand out from the head and then flow over the shoulders, but different tribes have different styles of war-bonnets. For example, the Apache bonnet’s feathers droop over the head. In some tribes, even great men would wear only a few feathers. In others, their head-dresses would be very large. The Kingfisher’s “war-bonnet” crest looks like a Blackfoot war-bonnet with all of the feathers standing straight up.

Answers:
1. Otters (Four)
2. He feared that the Wolf would fall through the ice and Old Man would be left alone.
3. He cried because he was afraid of being left alone.
4. Old Man threw a war-club at Kingfisher.
5. The feathers on top of his head stood straight up.

RIVER ICE: Moving water can make ice thicknesses unpredictable. Also, falling through the ice on a river can be more dangerous because of the chance you will be swept downstream and away from the hole before you come back up. (This is what happened to the wolf.) Cold water rescue experts have a saying: “No ice is safe ice.” It’s fun to play on ice, but you always have to know, and remember, how dangerous it can be. If you live in an area where water surfaces freeze, review ice safety with your kids!
How Nighthawk Got His Fine Clothes

Think About the Story

1. What did Old Man give to the stone?
2. Why did Old Man decide he needed his robe back from the stone?
3. What did the stone do to Old Man?
4. How did the Nighthawk free Old Man from the stone?
5. What did Old Man shake on the Nighthawk’s wing to form spots and stripes?

Think About the Story

Instead of admitting he needed his robe to keep warm, Old Man justified his actions by saying, “That stone never did anything for me anyhow. Nobody is ever good to a stone.” Have you heard someone try to cover up their true reason for doing something by blaming another person?

Newspaper Activity

Nighthawk went out of his way to help Old Man and even damaged his beak in doing so. Find a story in today’s newspaper about someone who made a special effort to help out another person. Answer these questions:

1. Who was in trouble?
2. What was the person’s problem?
3. Who helped?
4. Did they know each other?
5. Was it the helpful person’s job to help?
6. How did the person help?
7. Was the helper in any danger of injury?
8. What if the helper had not come along?
9. Should the helper get a reward?
10. What do you think would be a good reward?
**Nature Notes: The Nighthawk**

Nighthawks aren’t hawks. They’re a relative of the whippoorwill and eat insects. The broad, wide bill didn’t actually get that way by pounding on a rock -- it’s built like that to help scoop up mosquitoes and other flying insects as the nighthawk swoops through the evening air. If you’ve seen the nighthawk in the evening, you can see why it is also called a bullbat: Insect-chasers have a way of flying that is the same whether they are swifts, swallows, nighthawks or bats, but it’s the nighthawks and bats that you see flitting around in the dusk. Even in the half-light of early evening, the spots that Old Man put on Nighthawk’s wings are clearly seen as he loops over the fields on his long, swept-back wings.

**LET’S HAVE FUN WITH THE STORY**

**Artistic Connections:**

Old Man had just one robe. If he had more than one robe he might not have taken his back from the stone. Before the coming of the Europeans, most North American Indians made clothing primarily from animal skins, but once sheep were introduced to the Southwest, several tribes in that part of the country became skillful weavers, creating things such as rugs and clothing. Here’s a simple way for younger children to weave.

**Weaving on a Loom**

**Materials:** Shoe box lid, scissors, pencil and ruler, string and yarn

**Steps:**

- Using pencil and ruler, make even and equal number of dots on the narrow sides of the box lid. Make notches at dots.

- Attach string to the box, going from one notch to the notch opposite it on the other side of the box. Go back and forth by looping around each notch, bringing the string across. Continue until complete and then knot the string. Hold the box lid so that the strings are running towards and away from you rather than from side to side.

- Using yarn, weave across the strings, going under one, over the next, under the one after and so forth. Use a coarse comb to press the wool gently but firmly to the end of the loom closest to you. (A “pick” works well for this!) When loom is full, bend tabs of notched box down and slip the woven piece off. Weave the loose ends together and tie them.

**Answers:**

1. His robe
2. It began to snow and the wind blew from the north.
3. The stone chased Old Man and sat on his back.
4. He struck the stone and broke it in two pieces.
5. He shook fine white powder from the broken stone.
Why Our Sight Fails With Age

Think About the Story

1. What did Old Man hear in the forest?
2. Who did Old Man discover laughing?
3. What was the Chickadee throwing in the air and catching?
4. What did Old Man offer to give the Chickadee to hear its secret?
5. What three things did the Chickadee tell Old Man to not do while waiting for his eyes to return to his face?

Talk and Write About the Story

How would Old Man’s situation been different had he followed Chickadee’s advice? Why do you think Old Man became careless?

Do your eyes ever feel itchy? What are some things that can make people’s eyes uncomfortable or make it hard for them to see clearly? List some medical devices, medicines or other ways people today can make their eyes feel better or improve their vision. What could someone do about these problems in Old Man’s day?

Newspaper Activity

Chickadee teaches Old Man a new trick, but Old Man has to learn the steps of this fun skill, and he also has to learn the rules.

Find a story in the paper that teaches people how to do something. Create a numbered list of the steps. Try to use the fewest words possible without leaving out anything important. Are there important rules to remember about this new skill? Write them down separately. Now exchange lists with someone who chose a different story. Have each person, using the list as a guide, describe how to do the new skill, and talk about any important rules. Were they able to give an accurate description?
Old Man’s Necklace: What did it look like?

Christopher Baldwin has drawn Old Man’s necklace with an eye towards the way it will look once it is hanging around Chickadee’s neck, but what would such a necklace really look like?

To answer the question, you have to consider two things:

1. The various nations of people in North America were diverse. Before the coming of the Europeans, tribes on the Northern Plains would not have ready access to beads, which were made from shells by coastal peoples. They might have crafted ornaments from bone, leather, antlers, fur and stone.

2. Like any culture, Indian traditions adapted to the times. Certain changes, like the introduction of the horse or of firearms, had sudden and profound impact on local cultures. Indians were in contact with other tribes and there was a constant, healthy and natural flow of ideas and innovations going on between nations throughout the continent. Pre-industrial cultures change slowly, but they do change.

Wampum was strictly an East Coast cultural item. But the French and English traders who came to the Northern Plains in the mid-1700s had worked for a century or more with the East Coast Indians by whom beads were made, and prized. These Europeans came west with beads already part of their approach and the people of the Northern Plains were delighted to incorporate them into their clothing and jewelry designs.

So, what did Old Man’s necklace look like? The story doesn’t say when it happened, so you can do what Christopher did: Look at Chickadee’s necklace and use your imagination!

Feelings About The Story

Chickadee was comfortable entertaining himself and found things to make himself laugh. Do you enjoy spending time alone sometimes? Do you find ways to have fun? What are some of the things you enjoy doing alone?

Old Man ultimately regretted having met Chickadee because of his troubles. Who do you think is more to blame for the situation? Is it Chickadee’s fault or Old Man’s fault?

Answers:
1. Laughter
2. Chickadee
3. His eyeballs
4. A necklace.
5. Move, laugh or breathe.

Questions about eyes and vision: Some of the things that can effect our eyes include allergies, blowing dust or diseases like pink eye. More serious eye diseases could include glaucoma, macular degeneration and others that destroy vision over time. Remedies might include glasses, operations for glaucoma, prescription drugs or over the counter allergy medicines.
How Old Man Stole the Sun’s Leggings
Part One

Think About the Story

Who made the Sun a pair of leggings?
How were the leggings decorated?
When night came where did the Sun lodge?
Who is the only person who knew just where the Sun’s lodge was?
Why did Old Man want to steal the Sun’s leggings?

Talk and Write about the Story

If the Sun lodges in the west, where does he rise in the morning?
How is Old Man characterized in this story? What does the Sun think about him?
Why did the noises at night bother Old Man?

Newspaper Activity

When Old Man saw the Sun’s leggings, he felt that he just had to have them. Look in today’s newspaper for advertisements that you feel do a good job of making people feel they need to get something. What are some of the words and artwork that you feel are most effective?

Make an advertisement for the Sun’s leggings that would make people want them. (But make sure they have a chance to buy them, so they don’t think they’re supposed to steal them!)
MAKE A PREDICTION ABOUT THE STORY

What do you think will happen when the Sun finds that his leggings are missing?

DEALING WITH NERVES

Old Man began to sweat, his breath was short and his heart beat loudly because of having done something wrong and being fearful. But you don’t have to do something wrong to feel nervous. Can you think of a time when you felt that way? Do you get nervous speaking in front of large groups or taking tests? What are some ways that help you relax when you are nervous or afraid?

Answers:
1. The Moon (his wife)
2. They were decorated with colored porcupine quills and strange signs.
3. In the West
4. Old Man
5. Old Man was greedy and he thought the leggings would make him handsome.

If the sun lodges in the West, he probably rises in the East. As for how he feels about Old Man, how does anyone feel about a person who is jealous and sneaky and maybe a little dishonest? A chance to talk about how sometimes you are friends with people who don’t always do the right thing. What are the best ways to be friends with people like Old Man?
Think About the Story

1. What woke Old Man from his sleep?

2. What happened that Old Man saw as a sign of bad luck?

3. How did Old Man try to hide from the Sun?

4. What was the Sun’s reaction toward Old Man the second time Old Man stole the leggings?

5. What does the Sun warn will happen if Old Man steals again?

Think About the Story

What lesson should Old Man have learned the first time he stole the Sun’s leggings? How was the Sun’s reaction the first time he caught Old Man different than when he caught him the second time? Why do you think Indians told this story to their children?

Newspaper Activity

Old Man stole the leggings once and the Sun simply laughed at him for being so foolish and took the leggings back. But the second time, the Sun was angry.

Go to the comics section of today’s paper and find an example of someone who is getting in trouble for something he or she has done before. Does the comic strip make it seem funny? Stories and comic strips, can make that sort of thing seem funny, but there are news stories in the paper every day about people who do things they shouldn’t, with results that aren’t funny at all.

Find an example of a story or picture in the paper of something that isn’t funny, and that wouldn’t have to happen if people learned proper safety rules. What rule was broken?
LET’S HAVE FUN WITH THE STORY
Language “Art”

Old Man noticed several times that there were signs made by the Sun and Moon all around. He did not know what the symbols stood for. Long ago, Indians used symbols to communicate and to keep records of their history.

Below are some examples of symbols. Draw them on the board or as handouts and encourage students to add their own symbols. Then have them write about something they did, using symbols, and see if a friend can read it and say what happened to them.

### Picture Symbols

- Mountains
- Peace
- Snow
- Rain
- Bear
- Deer
- Snake
- Tipi
- Sun
- Child
- Day-Night-Day-Night (Time)

Sequoyah (1770-1843) is famous for his Cherokee alphabet which consisted of 86 symbols. Each symbol represented a syllable in the Cherokee language, so that a Cherokee speaker who learned the alphabet could read and write anything in that language. With this advantage, the Cherokee quickly became a literate people.

**Answers:**

1. A bad dream
2. A great white owl flew past as he approached the Sun’s bed.
3. He ran to the mountains and hid in a deep gulch among bushes
4. He scowled and was very angry. He grabbed Old Man and threw him on his back.
5. The Sun threatens to hurt Old Man badly.
How The Duck-People Got Their Fine Clothes

Talk and write about the story

1. What types of birds are named in this story?

2. What does the storyteller say about the appearance of the Duck-people?

3. Who did not trust Old Man?

4. What did Old Man begin to do when he first lured the Duck-people into his lodge?

5. What did Old Man demand of the Duck-people while he painted them?

Think about the story

The Duck-People were lured into Old Man’s lodge because he sang sweetly and offered them a dance. How would you react if a stranger offered you things? What would you do?

The loon and the gray goose felt uneasy and did not trust Old Man. Their instincts were correct. Do you listen to your own instincts?

Newspaper Activity

Break into groups. Half the groups are Wood Ducks, half are Mallards.

Wood Ducks: Look in today’s paper for feature stories about fashion, pictures of people in fancy clothing or advertisements for clothing that is supposed to make you look fashionable. For each outfit you select, give it ratings for comfort, appeal and practicality. Share your group’s top rated and bottom rated outfits.

Mallards: Look in today’s paper for pictures or ads featuring people at work. For each outfit you select, give it ratings for comfort, appeal and practicality. Share your group’s top-rated and bottom-rated outfits.

All Ducks: From the shared outfits, let each group select an outfit for work and one for fun.
Where did this story come from?

Frank Linderman collected stories from the Blackfeet, Chippewa and Cree people he met in Montana. Sometimes, it is directly stated where the story originated. In other cases, there may be clues in the story to tell where the story came from. In this story, Old Man makes a lodge of poles covered with moss that he had gathered by rolling it into a ball.

But where would he find that much thick moss out on the grassy plains of Montana and southern Canada? That means it almost certainly is not from the Blackfeet. They might have found moss in the mountains, but it wouldn’t be thick enough to cut and roll for making lodges. (Besides, the Blackfeet lived in tipis, not lodges.) But the Cree and Chippewa came from the area around the Great Lakes, in a much damper climate. This story -- or at least this version of it -- is probably one either the Cree or Chippewa brought with them when they moved to the Plains.

Let’s Have Fun with the Story

Artistic Connections:

If you were one of the Duck-people, what colors would you want to be painted? Make a life-size drawing of yourself by having a friend or adult trace around your body on a large sheet of butcher paper. Paint the body the colors of your choice.

Researchable Question:

This story includes explanations of why the loon walks oddly. A group of students who wanted a very interesting topic to report on could be sent to look up this odd water-fowl (which is not a duck). Loons indeed are almost helpless on land, but wonderfully well adapted to diving. Their life cycle is interesting in many ways, and students at any level would be able to quickly craft a fascinating report.

On-line tip:

You can find information about ducks and their habitats at http://www.greenwing.org/dueducator/noncssdu_educator.html. This is part of the Web site of Ducks Unlimited, a hunter’s conservation group that lobbies and fundraises to preserve wetlands and other duck habitats. The site has teaching guides for a variety of grade levels, as well as links to activity pages for kids.

Answers:

1. Ducks, loons, and geese
2. He says they all looked alike, “...they all wore the same colored clothing.”
3. The gray goose and the loon
4. He painted the ducks, the geese and the loons colors of their choice.
5. He demanded that they keep their eyes closed.

Extending the Newspaper Activity: Career “soft-skills” include selecting appropriate clothing for the workplace. Once outfits have been selected, lead into a discussion of work-versus-leisure dress. A good start is to suggest a ridiculous “What if .. ” scenario -- “What if the firefighter wore the stylish dance outfit to work?” Then refine it to less obvious points. How many outfits would work either way?
How Old Man Remade the Earth

Part One

Think About the Story

1. Why did everyone come find Old Man?
2. Which group were not afraid of the flood?
3. Which animal did all the other animals think was the wisest?
4. What did Old Man build out of logs and withes of willow?
5. What was the way the water played with the raft compared to?

Talk and Write About the Story

Old Man makes a raft using withes. These are a type of rope made by twisting or braiding flexible twigs together. Willows have long, flexible twigs and would be good for this purpose. Without iron to make nails, people had to find other fasteners. Can you think of some other ideas for fasteners that might be practical?

Newspaper Activity

When the animals were faced with a natural disaster, they put their differences aside and worked together. Find examples in today’s paper of people working together to help repair damage from a natural disaster, to build peace or to accomplish something else positive.

Make a collage of this type of story combined with pictures, headline words and cartoons that encourage people to work together. Now, talk about this: Once you began to look for those stories, pictures, cartoons and words, did they begin to be easier to find? Do you think it would also be easy to find pictures, stories and words about people being mean and hurting each other, if that was what you decided you wanted to look for?
Old Man is sometimes depicted as a thief, a braggart and a bully, but now we see him in his role as someone the animals trust and depend upon. Often, people are seen in different ways depending on how they behave under different circumstances. If you were Old Man, wouldn’t you prefer to have the animals think of you in this way? Why is it that some people just can’t seem to be at their best all the time? What are the limits to how much a person can mess up before others stop trusting him or her entirely?

Plains Sign Language -- and other ways of communicating across cultures

When the animals gather at Old Man’s lodge, some of them whisper, but others talk in signs. The Plains Indians created sign language because there were so many languages that it was difficult for people from different tribes to communicate. Some people like the Kiowa, who traveled a great deal, became very good at signing. Others, who didn’t run into strangers as often, weren’t as fluent. Some tribes used signs as well as spoken language as they were telling stories or during other ceremonies, and, today, some of these people continue to use sign language in those activities. Otherwise, few young modern Indians know this language.

American Sign Language, used by the deaf, is not particularly useful when traveling in other countries; Although it does not follow English grammar and syntax rules, it is not a universal language, and the deaf in different nations have come up with their own methods of signing.

There are however, examples of spoken “contact languages” that function like Plains Sign Language. Also known as “pidgins,” these contact languages are largely invented and have limited use beyond initial conversations or specific purposes such as trading. The term “pidgin” often makes people think of “Pidgin English,” a language used for trade in the South Seas that combined English, Chinese, Malay and Portuguese, but the overall term can refer to a similar language anywhere in the world.

Swahili is a Bantu language of Africa used in coastal regions frequented by traders. Over the centuries, Swahili picked up words from Arabic, Persian and other foreign languages common to traders. It became a handy language for use in Africa that combines the rules and forms of other languages and crosses borders easily. Swahili is more of a “creole,” which, despite its cross-cultural roots, is an actual working language that can be used in day-to-day life, as opposed to a pidgin which is primarily for initial contact and trade purposes.

FEELINGS ABOUT THE STORY

Old Man is sometimes depicted as a thief, a braggart and a bully, but now we see him in his role as someone the animals trust and depend upon. Often, people are seen in different ways depending on how they behave under different circumstances. If you were Old Man, wouldn’t you prefer to have the animals think of you in this way? Why is it that some people just can’t seem to be at their best all the time? What are the limits to how much a person can mess up before others stop trusting him or her entirely?

Answers:
1. They were frightened because of the rain and wanted his advice.
2. The fish-people
3. The Beaver
4. He built a raft.
5. It was compared to the way a bear plays with a mouse.

FASTENERS: Answers will vary. Leather thongs are a good answer specific to Indian techniques. Elsewhere, pegs were and are still used in woodworking. The wooden peg must be carved and a hole drilled in the boards it will hold together. If done correctly, peg construction is quite sturdy and durable.
How Old Man Remade the Earth

Part Two

THINK ABOUT THE STORY

1. What did Old Man ask the Spotted Loon to bring to him?

2. What did Old Man do to bring the Spotted Loon back to life?

3. Which creatures were brave enough to come forth and dive in the water seeking dirt?

4. Which animal was sent to run around the land to see how big it was?

5. What did Old Man create with handfuls of mud because he was lonesome?

TALK AND WRITE ABOUT THE STORY

Old Man created man and woman because he was lonesome even while surrounded by animals and birds. Have you ever felt lonely if you were somewhere and didn’t know anyone? What would you do to help someone that is new to your school, your class or your neighborhood? Think of some things like moving from the country to the city, that can make a person feel especially lonely in a new place. What are some things that can help those people feel more comfortable?

Newspaper Activity

Muskrat was not the sort of animal we expect to be a hero, but he dove three times, even though it was very dangerous and difficult, and Old Man had to keep giving him life again. Find an example in today’s paper of an unexpected hero or of a person who made people’s lives better by doing more than was expected or required. Discuss the examples found by your class and vote for a “local hero.” Write a letter to that person thanking them for caring. If you can’t find an address for your Local Hero, write a letter to the editor about it instead.
**Feelings About The Story**

Muskrat is a shy, quiet little animal. Old Man didn’t even think to ask for his help. The other animals laughed when they saw that Muskrat was going to try to dive down to find dirt. What did they learn? What is the storyteller is trying to tell us?

**If Old Man Needed Your Help, How Long Could You Stay Underwater?**

Try having students hold their breath for a pre-determined time. One minute is a good goal -- it’s a tough but reasonable length of time, and it’s easy for them to watch a sweep-second hand and see how much time is left. (A nice way to practice visualizing and analyzing portions of a pie chart!)

If more than one student can make one minute, increase the time in 15 or 30 second increments until you’ve found the upper limit for your class. (Or until you feel uncomfortable letting them go longer!)

Then, without telling them a number, set a timer for fifteen minutes, the time that a real muskrat can hold its breath. Put the timer in a place where they can’t see what it is set for. Go about other classroom tasks while waiting for the timer to ring. Because you haven’t told them how long muskrat can stay submerged, it will increase the suspense as they wait for the timer to go off, and the surprise when it finally does!

With curiosity sparked, you can now make it a research project to find out how long other air-breathing animals can stay underwater. (Don’t forget penguins and whales!)

Here’s a good site for young readers to learn more about Muskrat and other animals.

http://www.nature.ca/notebooks/english/muskrat.htm

This site, from the Canadian Museum of Nature, is our source for the fact that muskrats can stay underwater for as long as 15 minutes.

**Answers:**
1. Dirt
2. He blew his own breath into the Loon and it was given a new life.
3. Loon, Otter, Beaver, Gray Goose and Muskrat.
4. the Wolf
5. People (the Chippewa)
Why Curlew Has A Crooked Bill

THINK ABOUT THE STORY

1. What were the mice doing that Old Man wanted to do?
2. What does Chief-Mouse warn Old Man of?
3. What two animals come to the aid of Old Man as he lies beneath the fallen rock?
4. Why does Coyote leave without helping Old Man?
5. How does Curlew attempt to free Old Man?

TALK AND WRITE ABOUT THE STORY

Old Man refused to listen to what Chief-Mouse said about the danger of running under the rock. What are some things that people tell you to keep you out of danger?

What does the storyteller say about saying mean things and losing your temper? How do you act when you are angry? What are some positive ways to deal with anger and frustration? How do you feel when you are around someone who loses their temper?

PETROGLYPHS

Curlew tried to peck at the rock with his beak to free Old Man from beneath the rock. Ancient people carved designs called “petroglyphs” into stones. Stones were used to chip away rock, creating pictures and other symbols. Some petroglyphs are very ancient, others are only a few hundred years old. These petroglyphs are from Canyonlands National Park in Utah. Some depict men on horses. What does that tell you about their age? Can you guess what some of the other designs on this rock wall might represent?
Editor’s Note:

“I have forgotten who it was that got Old Man out of his trouble, but it seems to me it was the bear.”

One challenge in finding and presenting folktales and stories from other cultures is the difference in narrative structures. A European storyteller would feel the need to wrap up the story by telling how Old Man gets out from under the rock, but the Indian storyteller does not. The story is about Old Man’s rude behavior, and Curlew’s bill, and the details of how Old Man eventually extracts himself from the predicament is irrelevant and distracts from the theme of his unpleasant way of seeking help.

However, the way the storyteller tosses off the ending is, in fact, a way of wrapping it up, and an endearingly realistic moment in which a wise old man dismisses the part of the story that is of little interest. As an example of true oral style, this is a nice moment.

(And fans of the film, “The Princess Bride,” can appreciate that it is not exclusively an Indian narrative style.)

Creating petroglyphs

Materials:  
- Bag of quick-mix cement, or plaster
- Pie tin or coffee can lid
- Large paper clip (optional)
- Acrylic floor wax
- Tempera paints
- Stones, rocks

Prepare cement, or plaster mix. Pour thin layer of mixture into pie tin or lid and insert paper clip on one end if you want to be able to hang up later. Let dry overnight, paint gray or brown and allow to dry thoroughly. Have students carve pictures or symbol into the dried mixture with sharp stone or other tools. Brush on coat of floor wax to make it shiny.

Answers:
1. They were running past and beneath a dangerous rock.
2. Chief-Mouse warns Old Man that he will shake the ground causing the heavy rock to fall.
3. Coyote and Curlew
4. Old Man calls him bad names.
5. Curlew tries to break the rock by pecking it with his bill.
**The Unlucky One**

**Part One**

**Think About The Story**

1. What was the young man who had ill fortune renamed?

2. What would happen when Unlucky-One went hunting?

3. What was the very first thing the old woman told Unlucky-One he must do?

4. Who did the old woman advise Unlucky-One to seek?

5. Who does the great white Beaver send Unlucky-One to find?

**Talk and Write About The Story**

Why does Unlucky-One say that his, “heart is growing wicked?” The Unlucky One becomes sour, and people don’t want to be around him anymore. When people have trouble succeeding, or find it hard to make friends, they sometimes become unhappy and unpleasant. What would you do if you knew someone like The Unlucky One?

Unlucky-One trusted the advice and wisdom of the old woman and the Beaver. Is there someone in your life that you trust for good advice? Who do you seek when you need advice or help solving a problem?

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**Newspaper Activity**

The Unlucky One is having trouble being successful and wants to change his life, and his luck. Look for advertisements in today’s paper that seem to promise to change your life and your luck in one way or another. What ones seem practical? Do some of them seem to be promising more than seems likely? Are some simply exaggerating in a good-natured way in order to get your attention? Cut out ads that suggest that they will help you change, put each on a piece of paper and write adjectives on the paper that describe what they promise you will be: “Richer!” “Slimmer!” “Wealthier!” etc.
“He tried to dream and get his medicine but no dream would come.”

One important way the young man is unlucky is that he cannot have his medicine dream, the dream that will help him understand what he should do with his life and how his religion will help him. In many Indian cultures, young men needed this dream to become adult members of the community. In their dream, they would learn what symbols would be important for them. In this story, the spirit world reaches out to help this young man find his way.

**This three-part story is a potential gateway for bringing up difficult issues.**

Unlucky-One is said to be fine-looking yet he has no friends and experiences bad luck. He gets to a point where he doesn’t want to live, but when the old woman offers help, he accepts the quest. What he is about to do is not easy, and over the next three chapters, we will see him hungry, frightened, cold and yet taking the next step, and the step after that.

In many fairy tales, the “old woman” or other mystical figure who magically appears to intervene in an unfortunate life does little more than help make it easier for the world to recognize the inner goodness of the person. But there are certain stories, like “East of the Sun and West of the Moon” or the Irish stories of Deirdre or of the Sons of Lir in which the person must undergo a harsh quest before the world will accept and salute their goodness. Having a magic wand solve your problems is appealing, but the quest stories are a better metaphor when it comes to real-life solutions.

In this story, the struggle is much more internal. Although the Unlucky One will go through a physical trial before he reaches the end, this moral story is much more based on spiritual growth. The story never says why this young man cannot dream and has no luck, because it is more concerned with what he does to overcome his problems.

One thing that we will see in this three-part story is that the Unlucky One may not be fortunate, but he is courageous. Having the courage to confront problems and do the hard work of changing your “luck” is very much the point of this story. *(Adjust to your age group, but this can be used to help start discussions about abuse and other issues.)*

**Answers:**

1. The Unlucky One
2. His bow would break or he would lose his lance
3. She told him he must learn a song she sang for him.
4. The Great White Beaver
5. The Coyote

**When friends are like the Unlucky One:** Sometimes you can’t do anything to help a person who is sour and whose “heart is growing wicked.” But you can avoid teasing, excluding or making fun of them.
**The Unlucky One**

Part Two

**THINK ABOUT THE STORY**

1. On what day did Unlucky-One find the Coyote?

2. Who did the Coyote get meat from to give to the hungry young man?

3. Where did the Coyote bring Unlucky-One?

4. According to Old Man who is the only one that knows how to change Unlucky-One’s luck?

5. What did Old Man give the young man to help him not be afraid of the ghost-people?

**TALK AND WRITE ABOUT THE STORY**

We’ve seen Old Man in many ways: As a clown, as a bully, as a braggart and as a creator and hero. What is Old Man like in this story? Can you think of characters in other stories or movies that are described or shown in a similar way?

The Unlucky One knows that Old Man is going to help him, but he is still afraid to go into the cave. Have you ever been afraid to do something or face someone even though you knew it was going to help you? Was your heart also “beating like a drum at a dance”? Did you also look around to try to talk to a friend for a moment more, instead of going ahead? Write about your experience.

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**Newspaper Activity**

Coyote has shown the Unlucky One where to find help with his problem. Your newspaper has announcements and advertisements that show people in your community where to find help with their problems. Set a time limit and have everyone in your class go through the paper and find as many of these as they can, writing down the name of the group that helps, the problem they help with and where to find them in your community. See who finds the most.
"Smoke," said Old Man, and passed the pipe to his visitor.

We know that smoking is very unhealthy, but Indians didn’t smoke just for something to do, and they usually didn’t smoke very much at a time as people do today.

Smoking was part of many ceremonies, just as drinking wine is part of many ceremonies for other people. Just as there is a big difference between using wine in a religious ceremony and sitting around drinking several glasses of wine in a social setting, there is a big difference between the smoking seen in this story and smoking tobacco as a habit.

One of the most important times to smoke was when somebody was asking for advice from a wise person. Today, when modern Indians come to a respected person in their community for help with a serious problem, they often bring a small gift of tobacco, even though they probably aren’t going to have a ceremony to smoke it.

FEELINGS ABOUT THE STORY

When The Unlucky One is going to see Old Man, he is frightened. Then he discovers Coyote has left and he is all alone. Part of this type of quest is understanding that others can help, but you have to do it yourself. Coyote took him to the cave, but Coyote can’t go in with him, and he shouldn’t: There is nothing wrong with Coyote’s luck, and this isn’t his quest.

You can discuss this on a very simple basis: When young people go to the mall to look for jobs, they often bring a friend with them, and one thing potential employers stress is to come by yourself and show that you are a responsible person who can show up for work and do the job. Having your friend hanging around behind you makes a very poor impression of insecurity and immaturity.

But it has a more profound side, as well. Your friends can suggest that you go to a counselor or a self-help group. And, like Coyote, they can walk with you right up to the door. But they can’t go in with you. Like Coyote, there comes a point where they have to go about their own business. Your problems are your own, and you can’t solve them until you take the responsibility to face the fear of seeking out help, and the fear of helping yourself to really change. And it is, indeed, scary. But that’s what it takes.

Answers:
1. The fourth day
2. The wolf
3. Old Man
4. The Great Owl
5. An arrow
The Unlucky One

Part Three

Think about the story

1. What did Unlucky-One see on the very top of the mountain?

2. How did the ghost-people react towards Unlucky-One?

3. How did the Unlucky One react to the attack of the ghost-people?

4. According to the Owl what will make Unlucky-One a lucky man?

5. After taking the hide from the Otter what does the Unlucky One do with the body?

Talk and write about the story

What are some of the ways in which, after finding the otter, the young man shows that he is worth having as a friend, as a husband and as a leader? Make a list of adjectives that could apply to him, and put a star next to the ones that would surprise the people who only knew him before, when he was known as “The Unlucky One.” What name do you think they should give him now?

Newspaper Activity

The young man grew up to be a great leader among his people. Look in the newspaper for people who show leadership ability. See how many different kinds of “leaders” you can find. Some may be old or young, some may be in politics or sports or business or school. Cut out the stories or pictures of these leaders and make a poster showing the many ways a person can be a leader. Find words in the paper that describe good leaders and cut them out. Put them on your poster near the leader you think each word best describes.
“That night he dreamed and all was well with him.”

In the first part of the story, the young man could not dream. But as soon as he has found the otterskin, he stops to make camp and has an important dream, which is the true end of his journey.

In their medicine dreams, young men found out what animal would be their spirit guide throughout life. They might wear that animal’s skin or carry its teeth or bones in a special sack. The famous Oglala leader, Crazy Horse, wore a dried hawk as part of his special ceremonial clothes, because the hawk had come to him in his medicine dream. Although this general concept is common to many Indian cultures, there are great variations in how it is carried out, even within closely allied nations: Some would join special religious groups of men who had the same spirit guide animal, others would not tell anyone what their guide was.

Of course, we can guess that this young man’s guide was the Otter. Once he found it, and found his place in the world, he became a great leader!

FEELINGS ABOUT THE STORY

Some students may be disturbed by the killing of the otter, but of course the Blackfeet could not go to a grocery store and buy hamburger in a plastic tray or go to K-Mart and buy clothing. It may help to show how, throughout the story, the young man shows respect for the animals he meets. The respect with which animals are treated throughout these stories and the way in which they are referred to as “people” shows that they were not being used without dignity and appreciation.

That said, while many Indians ate a balanced diet and practiced fairly advanced forms of agriculture, the Blackfeet subsisted on a diet that primarily consisted of meat, with wild berries and some wild plants for variety. But according to John Ewers, many Blackfeet considered fish unclean, and a large number would not eat birds, either. The buffalo truly were central to Blackfeet culture.

One more note: It is often said that Indians had a use for every part of the buffalo. This is true, but that does not mean that every buffalo was entirely consumed. Without refrigeration, and with only a limited need for the various tools and other things made from buffalo, it is inevitable that the amount of a particular animal that was actively used would vary. Indians were aware of waste, but lived practical lives in the real world!

Answers:
1. The ghost people and the Owl.
2. They rushed at him with lances.
3. He stood bravely waiting to see what would happen.
4. The skin of the animal he will kill with Old Man’s arrow.
5. He gives it to the Wolf.

Traits of a friend, husband and leader: Among the others in the story, don’t neglect the way he repays the Wolf’s kindness. The cynical saying among business people is “Be kind to the people you meet on the way up. You may meet them again on the way down.” But there is truth behind that joke: People who are good to those who help them are less apt to find themselves heading back down again!
Why the Blackfeet Never Kill the Mouse-People

THINK ABOUT THE STORY

1. What did the animal-people and the bird-people quarrel about?

2. Who visited the council to put an end to the quarreling?

3. What did Old Man pull from his sack?

4. Which creature won the bone game Old Man arranged?

5. Why did Mouse give away the right to be chief?

TALK AND WRITE ABOUT THE STORY

The animals and birds became enemies rather than friends because of the quarreling. How do you solve disagreements with your friends?

Although the Mouse was small in stature compared to the Buffalo he won the bone game. What do you think the storyteller is trying to say about size and ability? What are some sports and games in which age and size don’t matter? Make a list of these games and sports, and see if you can find things they have in common that make them different from sports and games in which size or age make a difference.

Newspaper Activity

Mouse believes that the person who becomes chief will make a lot of enemies. Look at today’s paper and find examples of people in authority who have made unpopular decisions. (Remember that this could be in news, sports, arts or even an advice column.) How did the people affected feel about the decision? Was the decision-maker able to avoid making enemies, or was that an outcome that had to be accepted? Choose one example of a decision that was accepted, and write a brief statement saying how you think the person was able to get people to accept the decision. Choose one example of a decision that did not go well, and write a brief statement about why people were angry. Do you think they were more angry about the decision, or about the way in which it was handled?
**The real game behind this story**

The game Old Man introduced to the animals in this story had changed very little by the time George Bird Grinnell saw Blackfeet playing it. Here’s how he described it in 1892. (It could be fun for your students, but you should probably skip the high-stakes gambling!!)

Another popular game was what with more southern tribes is called "hands"; it is like "Button, button, who's got the button?" Two small, oblong bones were used, one of which had a black ring around it. Those who participated in this game, numbering from two to a dozen, were divided into two equal parties, ranged on either side of the lodge. Wagers were made, each person betting with the one directly opposite him. Then a man took the bones, and, by skillfully moving his hands and changing the objects from one to the other, sought to make it impossible for the person opposite him to decide which hand held the marked one. Ten points were the game, counted by sticks, and the side which first got the number took the stakes. A song always accompanied this game, a weird, unearthly air, if it can be so called, but when heard at a little distance, very pleasant and soothing. At first a scarcely audible murmur, like the gentle soughing of an evening breeze, it gradually increased in volume and reached a very high pitch, sank quickly to a low bass sound, rose and fell, and gradually died away, to be again repeated. The person concealing the bones swayed his body, arms, and hands in time to the air, and went through all manner of graceful and intricate movements for the purpose of confusing the guesser. The stakes were sometimes very high, two or three horses or more, and men have been known to lose everything they possessed, even to their clothing. -- “Blackfoot Lodge Tales: The Story of a Prairie People”

**LEADERSHIP**

The animals and birds held a council, talking long into the night to determine who would become chief. Can you think of other ways they could have chosen a chief? How are American presidents chosen? How are Prime Ministers chosen in other countries?

**Answers:**
1. They could not agree on which creature should be chief.
2. Old Man
3. A small polished bone
4. The Mouse
5. He thought he was too small and not warlike enough to be chief. He didn’t want enemies; he just wanted to live in peace.

**The difference between voles and mice**

What the Blackfeet before the coming of the Europeans would have known as “mice” are what modern Americans would call a “vole.” The pest we see more often is the house mouse, which did not arrive in North America until about the time of the Revolution. Voles, or “meadow mice,” are a different animal that looks very much like a mouse but is more apt to live at the base of grasses and, as the story says, make its home in an empty skull or other similar place. They eat grasses and other vegetation, and while they do damage crops, they wouldn’t have been much of a nuisance to the Blackfeet until relatively modern times, since agriculture was not traditionally a major part of Blackfeet culture.
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special thanks to David Pego (Saginaw Chippewa) and Charles Clute (Seneca) for their insights and assistance.