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## A Cross-cultural Anthology of Mythological Flood Stories

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## A Cross-cultural Anthology of Mythological Flood Stories

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### Abstract

This project is a literary production of mythological flood stories to help children better understand cultural diversity. Candidate stories for this project were reviewed through the application of several sets of filtering criteria developed by the author and based on tests described in the literature, to determine which stories would be used. The accompanying document includes nine stories from six continents, as rewritten by the project author. With each mythological flood story is a short narrative describing the background of the story, its cultural roots, or anything else that would bring life and interest to the retelling. This anthology will help teach children about a familiar story from diverse perspectives.

A Cross-cultural Anthology  
of Mythological Flood Stories

A Graduate Research Project  
Submitted to the  
Division of Library Science  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Gayle R. Kelley

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This Research Paper by: Gayle R. Kelley

Titled: A Cross-cultural Anthology of Mythological Flood  
Stories

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements  
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## Abstract

This project is a literary production of mythological flood stories to help children better understand cultural diversity. Candidate stories for this project were reviewed through the application of several sets of filtering criteria developed by the author and based on tests described in the literature, to determine which stories would be used. The accompanying document includes nine stories from six continents, as rewritten by the project author. With each mythological flood story is a short narrative describing the background of the story, its cultural roots, or anything else that would bring life and interest to the retelling. This anthology will help teach children about a familiar story from diverse perspectives.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

A world-wide revolution in science and technology, in telecommunications systems, in the international marketplace, and in the development of globally minded companies and organizations has brought about a need for an understanding of other cultures (Urch, 1992, p. 16). Never before has there been a greater urgency for Americans to become globally competent (Nebraska State Board of Education, 1990). In order that a nation develop a global perspective, its people need to have an understanding of the values and priorities of the many cultures of the world, as well as a knowledge of the basic concepts and principles related to the world as a whole (Randall, Nelson, and Aigner, 1991, p. 7).

Urch asserts that global "education (needs to) reflect more adequately on the diversity of humankind, the interdependence of nations and people, the need for international cooperation, and the role of individuals and schools in helping shape the future" (p. 16). Urch goes on to describe three basic dimensions included in global education:

The first includes the study of world cultures in enough depth so that students can view another culture through the eyes of people from that culture. The second includes a study of the major global issues and how they can be approached...The

third includes the study of our planet as an interdependent global system in which its physical and social environment should concern students throughout the world (p. 17).

Global education is an international education which is cross-cultural and helps teach about world views. It is sensitive to diversity (gender, race, class, and ethnicity) both within and between groups (Randall, Nelson, and Aigner, p. 10). These authors further assert:

Students and teachers must understand their own culture and then must understand the perspective of those who live in different cultures and how these perspectives were formed. In the United States, these cultures may be African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Native American or Euro American. Or they may be cultures from South Africa, Japan, Mexico, an Indian reservation, or Lincoln, Nebraska (p. 17).

In order to teach children about cultural diversity, various tools need to be developed so that teachers and parents can share with children the uniqueness of each of the world's peoples. As a small step toward this goal, therefore, a cross-cultural collection of flood stories similar to the Biblical account of Noah's ark was compiled as part of this research project. Although well known in the Judeo-Christian heritage as Biblical story, the interpretation of the great flood, dealing with the issue of punishment and the total deluge of the earth has also been told in many different ways in many different countries and cultures. These ancient stories survive today.



A few authors have collected and compiled Biblical stories and myths from around the world. One of the best known anthologies, In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World, was compiled by Virginia Hamilton (1988). She researched the backgrounds of twenty cultures and their interpretation of the creation story, rewriting these tales into an interesting multi-cultural collection. It is upon Hamilton's approach that this research project was based. Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark (1983), compiled a collection of prose, poems, songs, and illustrations from all over the world, related to the Noah's ark story. Unlike Hamilton's creation anthology, however, their work makes no attempt to balance cultural tellings of the story, nor do they put each item in a cultural context. The compilers, moreover, include modern creative retellings as well as versions derivative of the ancient stories.

#### Problem Statement and Purpose

Flood stories exist in many cultures and can be identified and retold in a manner appropriate for children. An anthology of cross-cultural stories related to the story of the great flood would help teach children about a familiar story from diverse perspectives. The purpose of this study was to compile and rewrite a collection of myths, legends, and folktales interpreting the flood story from

various countries and cultures from around the world. This anthology is intended to serve as a resource for teachers, parents, and students who are interested in teaching and learning about various cultures and nationalities and to place the stories in their cultural context. Folklore is a wonderful way to explore and understand those cultures which are different from one's own. This researcher hopes that a diverse compilation of stories from every continent of the world (except Antarctica) will help readers appreciate their own heritage as well as the richness of others.

Virginia Hamilton (1988) helps to put the purpose of this study into perspective:

Myths were created by people who sensed the wonder and glory of the universe. Lonely as they were by themselves, early people looked inside themselves and expressed a longing to discover, to explain who they were, why they were, and from what and where they came. (p. ix)

### Assumptions

Six basic assumptions underlie this study:

1. Teaching children about cultural diversity broadens their knowledge of the world and the people who live in it.
2. Studying myths, folktales, and legends of various cultures helps students gain a better appreciation of those cultures.
3. The great flood story crosses many cultures.
4. It is possible to identify a variety of mythological flood stories which represent racial and ethnic diversity.

5. When comparing certain elements of the Biblical account of the flood story to those of various cultures, some common elements can be identified.
6. The researcher can identify the defined elements within the stories and has the ability to rewrite the myths into an easily read and understood format.

### Significance

The American classroom is an appropriate place to begin exposure to diversity as teachers and students begin to talk about all the different cultures represented in the nation's schools, neighborhoods, cities, states, country, and world. Children need to know that it is acceptable to be different and that everyone can learn from someone else's traditions and cultures (Birdsong, 1989). This goal can be attained through multi-cultural education which must include an understanding of the beliefs, values, and views of various cultures (Skeele and Schall, 1994). Folktales, myths, and legends have common motifs that lead to common threads of meaning.

### Definitions

Several terms that are used in this study need to be defined.

Tiedt and Tiedt (1990) define **culture** as "a totality of values, beliefs and behaviors common to a large group of people. A culture may include shared language, and

folklore, ideas and thinking patterns, and communication styles--the 'truths' accepted by members of the group" (p. 10). **Global education** involves an in-depth study of world cultures so that students have a better understanding of peoples from those cultures. It includes issues pertaining to the physical and social environment of the world. **Cross-culture** implies the differences within groups based upon their goals, practices, or social group. These differences may focus upon race, ethnicity, language, or gender. For purposes of this study, the researcher has chosen to define **cultural diversity** as a broad range of differences among groups of people. For this study the term refers to ethnic groups both within and outside of the borders of the United States.

Many definitions for **mythology** have been suggested. Some see myths as a type of folklore that explains natural phenomena or religious beliefs (McClain, 1985) and often is concerned with gods and goddesses (Morford and Lenardon, 1985). **Folktales**, however, are stories that involve adventure and are usually passed down orally from one generation to another, with the main character or protagonist having human or subhuman characteristics (McClain, 1985). In more specific terms, this study deals with a variety of **flood myths** which refer to a widespread theme in mythology in which the entire world is destroyed by

a flood and usually at least one human being survives with his family, thanks to the grace bestowed by a god (Benet's Readers..., 1987). The flood is a punishment, and often the survivors escape to a mountain (Thompson, 1956, p. 188). In defining **motif** Thompson explains it as "those details out of which full-fledged narratives are composed" (p.10).

### Limitations

Although many forms of literature could have been used to help children develop cross-cultural understanding (Monson, 1989), only folklore such as legends, and myths similar to the great flood or Noah's ark, were used for this study. These stories contained at least the motif elements of punishment and the total deluge of the earth.

This study of cross-cultural flood stories revealed that many such stories do exist and the number given detailed treatment, therefore, had to be limited.

The folklore used in this study came mainly from stories in anthologies and picture books housed in the Donald O. Rod Library, but to some degree also from books obtained through other libraries. The sources used do not represent an exhaustive compilation of such folklore. This anthology is intended to appeal to all ages of children and adults; however, the primary intended audience is children who are eight to twelve years old.

Literature can mirror a culture (Jenkins and Austin, 1987). By focusing on a theme such as the flood story, as viewed from various cultures, this researcher intends this anthology to be used by teachers and parents to make children more aware of the world's many and varied cultures, and, at the same time, aware that many cultures share similar stories.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The literature review includes the variables of prejudice in children, multi-cultural education, and the use of literature to dispel those prejudices.

A review of the pertinent literature shows an on-going problem about children and prejudice in our society, but this problem is not without remedy. Multi-cultural education has been found to make a difference in dispelling prejudice in school-aged children. Studies have found that when folklore and other forms of literature are used with elementary children, these stories make a difference in understanding cultural diversity. Several authors have compiled cross-cultural folktales into anthologies which can be used in teaching students about ethnic groups and cultures other than their own.

Children should be exposed early in life to other cultures (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1981, p. 15). The authors draw their conclusions from the work of Piaget who "identifies the phase of intuitive thought most children pass through between the ages of four and seven. During this phase, they move from an egocentric view of the world and become able to react realistically to the environment to

project themselves into other roles and to think in terms of other people" (p.15).

Prejudice refers to unwarranted judgments and rigidity (Brown, 1972, p. vii) held by someone toward a group or an individual within that group. Research has found that prejudicial racial attitudes among children increase as they grow older (Balch and Paulsen, 1981). These researchers worked with 32 preschool children (25 male and 11 females) between the ages of 31 and 72 months to examine four instruments that would measure the racial attitude of these preschoolers toward blacks and whites. The tests described and used by Balch and Paulsen were:

1. The Preschool Racial Attitude Measure II (PRAM II), which was developed by J. E. Williams and composed of 24 drawings of paired black and white children. The children were to choose the one from the pair that was "ugly," "smart," or possessing some other such quality.
2. The Doll Test (DT), which involved putting the children into situations with a black and a white female doll or a black and a white male doll. children were asked questions such as, "Which is the bad boy/girl?" or, "Show the doll that you would like to sit next to at school."
3. The Projective Prejudices Test (PPT), designed by S. R. Zalk and P. A. Katz, used twenty slides of black and white children in various environments or situations. As they were shown a slide, the children were asked to respond to such statements as, "Here are two boys. One of them is a friendly boy. He has a lot of friends. Which one is the friendly boy?"



4. The Sticker Test (ST), developed by Koslin, Amarel, and Ames, involved a stimulus figure (such as a black or white girl, boy, father, or mother) located in the upper right-hand corner of ten 8 x 11 pages. A picture of a rag doll or a cat were found on two filler pages. As part of the test, the children were asked to put a sticker, representing themselves anywhere on the page (p. 2).

Balch and Paulsen found that on both the PRAM and DT tests a significant correlation occurred between a prejudicial attitude and the age of the children. "As the children increased in age they gave more responses in a prejudiced direction on these two tests, particularly in the five-year-old group" (p.8). Supporting and citing Litcher and Johnson's 1969 study which concluded that racial attitudes are solidified by age five, Balch and Paulsen concluded that stereotypic ethnic attitudes are measurable in young children.

In 1985 Byrnes and Jones conducted a study to determine the amount of prejudice held by first, third, and fifth graders in a rural homogeneous school. Past research had suggested to them that children are aware of differences in people and that this attitude is learned at an early age (p. 3). Fifty-three students from the rural school were used in the study and interviewed regarding their thoughts about people who are different from them with respect to race, religion, ethnicity, or family life style.

For the purpose of data analysis, two groups were established, one consisting only of first graders and the other of third and fifth graders. Byrnes and Jones observed that children were aware of ethnic and racial stereotypes even though very few of the children had had an encounter with people about whom they held stereotypical views. Furthermore, some of the youngsters viewed those from different racial groups as "foreign." Anglo children were most often the ones chosen by the subjects when asked to choose the child with whom they would most like to play (p.4). Of all the third and fifth graders interviewed, none of the children could give an accurate definition of "prejudice" (p. 5). After being shown four different collages, each depicting a different ethnic group, the intermediate grade children were asked, "What are these people like?" Most of the responses dealt with the physical features of the ethnic person, such as "black hair" or "brown skin." American Indians were the only groups described by what they did, such as "eat corn," "sew beads," or "live in tents." Comments such as, "They're foreigners," and, "They go to school, I think," were also mentioned.

Although the researchers concluded that "no child grows up without some prejudices" (p. 10), they are open to change far more frequently than adolescents and adults. Therefore,

they concluded that children can learn acceptance of other cultures as long as there are adults to guide them.

An Australian study on prejudice was conducted with 2,279 fifth and sixth graders representing 57 different nationalities, from all types of schools in and around the Sydney area (Philips, 1982, p. 91). In interviews conducted with the students the researcher found that the following social acts were described as acceptable, in descending order, by the children: not to play with, to play with at school, to have home to play, to have to tea, to have to stay overnight, to marry when grown up. The remainder of the study centered around the final statement of marriage as being the ultimate choice for acceptance of another. "Many of the children claimed that they did not wish social proximity with a number of groups because they were unfamiliar with them, thus suggesting the hypothesis that their preferences were influenced by limited ethnic interaction" (p. 91). Furthermore, this study revealed that the stages of cognitive development need to be taken into account when studying children's attitudes about race and ethnicity. Children of this age tend to "favor ethnic groups with whom they have friendly contacts and reject those with whom they are least familiar" (p. 98). An understanding of other cultures should be developed early in one's childhood

and then allowed to develop slowly throughout life (Monson, Howe and Greenlee, 1989, p. 3).

Once prejudice is recognized as existing in children, children should be provided with positive experiences which will break down these barriers of misunderstanding. Education is of primary importance. A far-sighted statement by Leonard Kenworthy in 1956 expresses the need for "global" or a multi-cultural education in schools:

World mindedness is not a monopoly of any grade level or any subject field. Any effective program needs to include a wide variety of experiences for every grade and every group of children no matter what their ability is. All children are going to live in the world and all of them need an introduction to the world-wide society as well as to their own community and nation. (p. 15)

Research has shown that elementary-aged children are not only developmentally ready to learn global perspectives, but that they are at an appropriate age to do so. A summary of research by Charles Evans (1987) in this area indicates that children ages 10 to 13 are receptive to learning about people from all over the world; however, negative attitudes tend to be formed about culturally diverse populations after age fourteen. The basis for his report is a number of studies dealing with global education in primary grade social studies programs. Students in these programs found more similarities than differences between themselves and

others. According to Evans, children can deal with global perspectives much earlier than normally presented (p. 548).

Within the curriculum of today's schools one of the most important topics is that of multi-cultural education. Some refer to it as a "hot" topic (Quezada, 1992). Through multi-cultural education, students can increase their understanding of themselves, develop self-esteem, and develop an appreciation for other people and cultures (Cargle, 1993). "Education can no longer be Eurocentric; it must include all cultures...Education, at its best, includes the multi-cultural history and heritage of all people" (p. 10). In establishing multi-cultural education in a school's curriculum, care needs to be taken to include an understanding of different cultures' beliefs, values, attitudes, and viewpoints. Those involved with multi-cultural education and children, such as teachers, principals, and media specialists, must remain committed to recognizing and appreciating diverse cultures, and to the establishment of their worth and respectability within society (Skeele and Schall, 1993, p. 85).

Children's literature can play an important role in understanding the world (Diakiw, 1990, p 297). When presented within the structure of a story, concepts about the world's culture are easier for children to assimilate. In his book The Memory Makers, Gordon Wells (1986) explains:

What I want to suggest is that stories have a role in education that goes far beyond their contribution to the acquisition of literacy. Constructing stories in the mind--or storying, as it has been called--is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning; as such, it is an activity that pervades all aspects of learning. Through the exchange of stories teachers and students can share their understanding of a topic and bring their mental models of the world into closer alignment. In this sense, stories and storying are relevant in all areas of the curriculum. (p. 194)

Diakiw (1990) states that stories can help students understand other cultures different from their own.

"Children need the bridge that stories provide in order to link their growing understanding of other cultures to their personal experience and background knowledge" (p. 297).

Exposing children to literature from different ethnic groups and cultures helps those children not only to appreciate, accept, and learn from them, but also to maintain an appreciation for their own (Jenkins and Austin, 1987).

These same authors claim that when they do, children will come to realize that:

1. No one culture is the center of the universe.
2. All ethnic groups have contributed in different ways to the fields of art, science, religion, and literature.
3. Everyone, regardless of race, color, or religion, has the same basic needs for love, recognition, shelter, and food (p. 2).

Experts in multi-cultural education frequently emphasize the importance of using literature to promote

cultural awareness. In order to help students develop an awareness of cultural heritages and various languages, Piper (1986) found that using traditional folklore is very beneficial. In an interview with Dan Madigan (1993, p. 173), Elizabeth Martinez stated that there is no end to the number of stories that can be told from other cultures because each has so many myths, legends, and folktales. These forms of literature help students clarify the values and beliefs of diverse cultures and discover great folklore upon which whole cultures have been founded (Norton, 1990). "Support for a study of various cultures that begins with the oral traditions of the people (folktales, fables, myths, and legends) and the history of the people is found in the writings of numerous authorities in folklore, anthropology, and multi-cultural education" (p. 29). Joseph Campbell (1988) asserts that myths from all cultures should be read by everyone because myths are a powerful form of literature. Myths are just as important today as in earlier times because they allow people to experience the awe of the universe, show the shape and mystery of the universe, support and validate the social order within the culture, and teach people how to live within that culture (p. 6). Virginia Hamilton bases her book, In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World on narratives known as myths which "are about a god or gods, about super human

beings, animals, plants, and about the people on earth. They are the truth to the people who believe in them and live by them. They give the people guidance and spiritual strength" (ix).

Through his research and studies, Stith Thompson (1977) concluded that folktales and myths hold an important place in modern society. He claimed that legends and oral traditions not only lend themselves to understanding about the present world and historical past, but also the earth's beginnings and the ordering of animals and men. Cultures based on Christianity, Islam, and Judaism have often based legends on accounts from the Old Testament, such as creation or the great flood (p. 235). Thompson also said that:

Legends about floods appear in many parts of the world. Many of these are independent growths, sometimes reminiscent of actual local catastrophes. But the most important of all flood legends is that which tells about Noah and his ark. Wherever Biblical tales have been learned, this one is sure to be popular because of its dramatic and picturesque details. (p. 236)

Thompson found that flood legends have strong roots in areas, such as Siberia, which tend to be very far from the originating point of the Noah legend, because, as missionaries brought this story to these remote areas, the people easily assimilated the stories into the local folklore (p. 237).



In 1955, Thompson published Motif-Index to Folk Literature, to assist in the classification of elements which make up traditional narrative literature. An element or unit of action found in a story is known as a "motif" (Blatt, 1993). Folktales have common motifs, which Thompson arranged so that comparisons can be made between the various legends, folktales, and myths of multiple cultures. Mythological flood stories usually include the following motifs:

1. The flood causes a total deluge of the entire earth (Thompson, 1955, p. 184).
2. The flood is a form of punishment (p. 186).
3. Escape from the deluge takes place in an ark or a boat (p. 187).
4. Pairs of animals are present on the ark (p. 188).
5. Bird scouts are sent from the ark (p. 188).
6. The escape from the deluge takes place on a mountain (p. 188).

Literature reveals that multi-cultural education is needed to help dispel the problems of prejudice in children. An approach to take in multi-cultural education is the use of children's literature. The use of folklore from various cultures can be used to help children understand the diversity of those groups and appreciate their own multi-cultural society. This use will help children become more tolerant and accepting of people who may be different from

themselves. Reading the myths, legends, and tales of particular cultures aids in giving the reader a glimpse into that social structure.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

This researcher developed an anthology of multi-cultural mythological flood stories that will help children see a commonality among cultures, and thus develop a better appreciation of groups different from their own. The sequence of events which led to this final project was based in part upon a model for studying multi-cultural literature, developed by Donna E. Norton (1990), and in part on this researcher's views. This sequence was as follows:

1. Identify ancient flood stories that have commonalities and are found in many cultures.
2. Analyze and identify values, beliefs, and themes found in the flood myths, legends, and tales.
3. Identify common elements of the multi-cultural flood stories.
4. Identify differences between the flood-related traditional literature, folktales, myths, and legends of particular cultural groups.
5. Select certain flood stories based on criteria to be discussed later in this proposal.
6. Rewrite the representative flood tales based on information gathered during the proposed research.

Numerous sources were available to use in locating anthologies and stories relating to mythological flood stories. The researcher initially consulted the following

references, for which complete citations can be found in the bibliography:

Dundes, Alan, Flood Myth

Eastman, Mary Huse, Index to Fairy Tales, Myths, and Legends, 2nd ed.

Eastman, Mary Huse, Index to Fairy Tales, Myths, and Legends, Supplement.

Eastman, Mary Huse, Index to Fairy Tales, Myths, and Legends, 2nd Supplement.

Ireland, Norma Olin, Index to Fairy Tales, 1949-1972.

Ireland, Norma Olin, Index to Fairy Tales, 1973-1977.

Ireland, Norma Olin, Index to Fairy Tales, 5th Supplement.

Thompson, Stith, Motif Index to Folk Literature.

All of these sources are housed in the Donald O. Rod Library.

Selection of stories for inclusion in the anthology included several steps. Initially the author read sixty-four mythological flood stories from six of the seven continents (not Antarctica), which included a good cross-section of cultures. Two criteria had to be satisfied for the story to survive the first filtering process. These criteria were the involvement of a deluge of the entire earth and the flood as a punishment sent by a god or greater being. Forty-seven stories met these criteria for inclusion in the anthology.

The second step in the filtering process included meeting four of the five criteria stated below:

1. The story is acceptable for readers of ages 8-12.
2. Several of the motifs described below can be found.
3. The authenticity of the story can be established.
4. The age of the story can be confirmed.
5. The story is suitably representative of its continent.

The criteria for authenticity and age were the most difficult to satisfy. Thirty-seven stories met the second set of criteria for inclusion in the anthology.

Using this final group of stories, the author used six motifs suggested by Stith Thompson as typically found in mythological flood stories. These six motifs include:

1. The flood caused a total deluge and destruction of the entire earth.
2. The flood was used as punishment by the god of a particular culture.
3. A boat of some sort is used as an escape from the deluge.
4. Pairs of animals survive the catastrophe.
5. Bird scouts are sent out from the boat.
6. The escape from the deluge takes place on a mountain.

Sixteen stories met this third set of criteria for inclusion in the anthology. In order to make the final selection more manageable, the stories had to include at least two motifs

beyond the initial filtering criteria. In addition, at least one story from each of the six inhabited continents had to be chosen. The final selection process included nine stories, one each from the following cultures: Hebrew, Babylonian, Indian (Asia), Masai (East Africa), Aboriginal (Australia), Lithuanian, Caddo (North American Indian), Inuit, and Chiriguano (South American Indian).

Preceding each story is a short comment section introducing the story with historical and cultural background. After reading each story numerous times to become familiar with it, the author rewrote each in a manner that would be appropriate and interesting for children aged eight through twelve. Following the nine stories is a list of sources that the author consulted for story ideas or that would further enhance the subject of mythological flood stories.

The anthology is composed of myths that describe how a deluge of water affected not only one culture, but also the entire world. All of the myths include a god who was angry with the people on earth because of their behavior, so this god conceived an idea of how to do away with the people. These myths express cultural diversity as various elements explain how a few chosen people escaped, what they ate, and how they made their livelihood. Although these stories are

set long ago, they do offer a glimpse into the lives of many diverse peoples who share a common story.

After reading the various flood stories the researcher completed an evaluation or survey form for each one. The following information was recorded for each story: index, title of the story, source in which the story was found, country or ethnic origin, motifs or elements found, historical background, and cultural notes relating to the story. (See Appendix A.)

The stories that met the required criteria of deluge and punishment were filtered further to determine selection. The stories need to be acceptable for readers of ages eight through twelve. Virginia Hamilton (p. xi) states that "not all myths are easily rendered on a level of understanding for many readers, while keeping their authority in the language use and style of the original narratives." The total number of motifs found in the stories was important, because the more motifs that are found, the more likely the story was to be included in the anthology. The authenticity of the story and its age were also important criteria. The researcher looked for stories that may have been lost through the ages. Finding a balance in cultures was important because all continents, with the exception of Antarctica, were represented by at least one story. (See Appendix B.)

When making the final selection of stories to be included in the anthology, the researcher selected nine stories, representing each of the continents (except Antarctica). Based on the motifs suggested by Stith Thompson (1956), the researcher decided each of the stories must show at least that the deluge of the flood covered the entire earth (p. 184) and that the flood was a punishment sent by a god or greater being (p. 186). Additional elements that were found in many stories include escaping the deluge in an ark or boat of some type (p. 187), pairs of animals in the ark (p. 188), bird scouts sent out from the boat (p. 188), and escaping the deluge on a mountain (p. 188). The form shown in Appendix C was used for the final filtering process.

Each story selected for the anthology is introduced by a brief description of the country, culture, or ethnic group of its origin. Material for compiling these narratives came from various sources, such as books related to individual culture studies or folklore study books. (See Appendix C.) The stories were rewritten into an easy-to-read and easily understood format for intermediate grade children. The motifs and elements were unchanged. The format of the anthology resembles the one Virginia Hamilton (1988) used for In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World.



In an attempt to help children better understand cultural diversity, this project was a literary production of mythological flood stories. The accompanying document includes nine stories from six of the seven continents rewritten by the project author. To prepare for this project, the author researched many sources in order to get a good cross section of stories from the many cultures of the world. Accompanying each mythological flood story is a short comment regarding the background of the story, its cultural roots, or anything that would bring life and interest to its retelling.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary

The goal of this research project was to develop an anthology of mythological flood stories that teachers and parents could use to help teach children about cultural diversity. Nine stories, familiar to the Biblical account of Noah's ark, yet from diverse cultures, have been compiled in an effort to show not only the differences in world-wide cultures, but also the similarities. Myths vary according to people's way of life, the geography and the climate in which they live, the food they eat, and how they obtain their food. These factors are evident in the stories included in the anthology. Diversity is apparent.

From the original sixty-seven myths that were reviewed, only thirty-seven met the first set of criteria for inclusion in the anthology. Of the thirty that did not meet the criteria, only five mentioned that a deluge of the entire earth was involved; six mentioned that the flood was a punishment from a god, and nine did not mention either motif. Some of the stories covered only a particular geographical area. The floods were sometimes caused by animals engorging themselves with water only to regurgitate it, or sometimes when lesser god's bellies were slit open resulting in a deluge of blood.

Of the stories rejected during the filtering through the second set of criteria, seven of the stories did not meet the tests of authenticity and age. Three of the stories did not include four or more motifs, and two were found to be inappropriate for the targeted age group of children because of the inclusion of incest, raw language, menstruating young women, or gore and garishness. The myths that did meet the criteria for inclusion met at least four of the five filtering criteria.

The filtering process of selecting the final stories for inclusion in the anthology was difficult. There were too many from which to choose and still stay within the guidelines outlined for the project. Sixteen stories involving thirteen cultures were eligible for inclusion. In order to meet the guidelines of seven to ten stories, the author first used the criteria of continents. All six continents in question were represented by at least one story. Another strong point for inclusion was the number of motifs represented in the story. The more motifs the more likely the story was to be included. The myths from Africa and Australia were chosen simply because they were the only stories representing their respective continents.

The strict criteria for this project precluded good, related stories that met the majority of the criteria. In a larger anthology, many of the other stories identified would

be included. It may also be useful for students to read these in another anthology to give students experience in comparing motifs and thus to extend their learning of other cultures.

Six basic assumptions were the basis for this project. Through the process of working on this research project, the author has found them all to be correct. Research has shown that when children are taught about cultural diversity, their knowledge of the world and the people who live in it is broadened. Research shows that by studying myths, folktales, and legends of various cultures, students gain a better appreciation of those cultures. This project illustrates that the great flood story crosses many cultures. The researcher was able to identify a variety of mythological flood stories which represent racial and ethnic diversity. Common elements were identified between the Biblical account of the flood story to those of various cultures. The researcher was able to identify the defined elements within the stories and was able to rewrite the myths into an easily read and understood format.

When children in intermediate grades use this collection of stories, their knowledge of peoples from various parts of the world will be broadened. It is suggested that these stories be used as a motivating factor for children to use when learning about other racial and

ethnic groups. Many more mythological flood stories exist that should not be overlooked. Students may be led to learn about customs and rituals other than their own and to develop an appreciation and tolerance for these people.

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## Appendix A

Initial Evaluation Form for Evaluating Multi-cultural Flood  
Stories

Index Citations: \_\_\_\_\_

Story: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Anthology: \_\_\_\_\_

Country/Ethnic Origin/Continent: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria:

 Deluge of entire Earth is involved. Flood was a punishment sent by a god or greater  
being.

Meets first criteria for inclusion in the anthology:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Historical Background:

Cultural Notes:

## Appendix B

Criteria for Filtering Information Related to Multi-cultural  
Flood Stories

Story: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Anthology: \_\_\_\_\_

Country/Ethnic Origin/Continent: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Filtering Criteria:

\_\_\_\_\_ Acceptable for readers of ages 8-12

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of motifs found

\_\_\_\_\_ Authenticity can be confirmed

\_\_\_\_\_ Age of story can be confirmed

\_\_\_\_\_ Suitably representative of its continent

Meets second criteria for inclusion in the anthology:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

## Elements of Multi-cultural Flood Stories Final Selection

Story: \_\_\_\_\_

Country/Ethnic Origin/Continent: \_\_\_\_\_

Appropriateness for Audience (8-12 year olds): \_\_\_\_\_

Characters:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Setting: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Motifs Found:

- \_\_\_\_\_ The flood caused a total deluge and destruction of the entire earth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The flood was used as punishment by the god of a particular culture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A boat of some sort is used as an escape from the deluge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pairs of animals survive the catastrophe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bird scouts are sent out from the ark.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The escape from the deluge takes place on a mountain.

Historical Background:

Source of Historical Background: \_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Notes Relating to the Story:

Source of Cultural Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

TALES FROM THE ARK

Mythological Flood Stories from Around the World

Retold by

Gayle R. Kelley

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## I. A Story from the Hebrews

### *Comment:*

*The story of Noah and the great flood comes from the first book of the Bible, Genesis, Chapters 6-9. Some modern Bible scholars refer to this Old Testament account as a Hebrew myth. The story of Noah is a story of justly deserved judgment and of a promise. The rainbow, which often comes after a rain, is a reminder of God's promise never again to destroy all life on Earth in a flood.*

### Noah and the Ark

When God first made the world it was good and perfect. In time God grew sad because the people He had put on his beautiful earth were destroying it and each other. They were unkind and hurt one another. The people forgot about obeying God's laws. They had spoiled the world.

Not only was God sad, but He was also angry because of the wicked ways of the people. He decided that because the people had disobeyed Him they had to be punished. So, God planned that He would destroy the entire earth by sending a flood to wash it clean. He knew that He would need to start all over.

Only one man on Earth had obeyed God. His name was Noah, and he was a righteous man who pleased God. God told Noah what He was planning to do, but promised him that he

and his family would be saved. Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who would help their father get ready for the flood.

God told Noah that he had an important job to do. He was to take gopher wood and build an enormous boat that was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. This ark was to contain three stories with rooms for the various animals to be taken aboard. God ordered Noah also to put a roof, a window, and a door in the ark. He was also to paint the inside and outside with tar. Noah had never built a boat before, but with God's help it turned out exactly right.

Noah worked hard on the boat, and, when he was finished with it, God told him that he and his whole family-his wife, his three sons, and his sons' wives-would all go on the ark. They made sure that they had all the food needed.

God also told Noah that he was to take into the boat a pair of all the birds or animals that He, the Lord God, had made. Noah and his family were to look after the animals and make sure that there was enough food for all of them, because it would be a long time before any of them would again see dry land. Noah and his family made the animals comfortable in the rooms of the boat and stored away the food that the animals would need.



When everything in the boat was as God wanted it, God shut the door of the boat. The people who had disobeyed him were left outside the ark.

Then God sent down the rain. It came down hard and made a terrible noise on the roof of the ark. It continued to rain. In time the water began to rise, and the boat began to float on the water. It rained for a long time.

The animals began to get restless. They wanted to get out and run in the green grass and smell the fresh air. Noah's family also became eager to get off the boat and live in a house again. Noah told them that they had to be patient and wait.

After forty days and forty nights, the rain stopped. When Noah looked out of the window, all he could see was water. In fact, the water was so deep it even covered the mountain tops. The waters covered the Earth for one hundred and fifty days. Then God caused a wind to pass over the Earth and the waters began to dry up. One day Noah's family could see the mountain tops poking up out of the water. The flood had lasted a year and eleven days.

Noah wanted to see if there was any dry land, so one day he sent a raven out from the ark, but the bird never came back. A few days later Noah sent out a dove, but the dove came back quickly, because she could not find a dry place to rest. Noah waited seven days before he sent out

the dove again. This time she saw a tree peeping up through the water. She broke off a twig with green leaves and flew back to the boat. Noah knew that this was a sign that the waters had gone down. After seven more days, Noah sent the dove out once again. This time the dove did not return. When Noah looked out of the ark he saw that the boat had come to rest on the side of a mountain.

God told Noah that the time had come for him and his family and all the animals to leave the ark. They were so happy to be out in the fresh air. Noah, his wife, their sons, and their wives all thanked God for keeping them safe from the flood. God commanded them and the animals to go out into the world and multiply.

God made a promise that He would never destroy the entire Earth again with a flood. As a symbol of His promise, God set a beautiful rainbow in the sky. Whenever His people see a rainbow at the end of a rain, they are reminded of God's love for them and His promise never to destroy the Earth with a flood ever again.

## II. A Story from Ancient Babylonia

### *Comments:*

*Of all the legends in recorded literature which refer to a great flood or deluge, by far the oldest one is from Babylonia. Actually the story is credited to the Sumerians*

because they were the predecessors of the Babylonians. The first Babylonian version of this story dates back to 2000 B.C. Western scholars have known about this interpretation for a very long time because it was recorded by the native Babylonian historian Berosus, who wrote the history of his country in the first half of the third century B.C. Written in Greek, some of the history has been lost. However, fragments relating to his account of the deluge have been preserved.

Although attempts by historians and literary critics have been made to show a great distance exists between the Babylonian and Hebrew story, there are several elements that are common to both. Sisuthrus, the hero of this deluge myth, was also the tenth Babylonian king, just as Noah was the tenth patriarch in the Old Testament. The birds sent out by Sisuthrus are comparable with the raven and dove dispatched by Noah. The mountain is also a common element to both versions of the deluge story.

#### The Saving of Mankind

The reign of King Sisuthrus lasted eighteen years. It was during this time that the great flood took place. The god Cronus appeared to Sisuthrus in a vision and warned him that, on the fifteenth day of the month of Daesius, he would

send a flood that would destroy all the people of the Earth. Cronus ordered Sisuthrus to write a history of his people from the beginning of time to the present and to bury these accounts securely in the City of the Sun at Sippara. He then told Sisuthrus to build a vessel that would hold him and his family and friends. Sisuthrus obeyed these directions in addition to filling the boat with provisions to sustain everyone during the journey. The deity also ordered that all species of animals that either flew in the sky or roamed upon the Earth should also be taken into the boat. The size of the vessel was about 3000 feet long by 1200 feet wide.

In time Cronus sent great rains which caused a flood to cover the entire earth. Nothing was left except Sisuthrus and his family and friends and animals that were safe and secure in the big boat. After the rains stopped and the vessel continued to float upon the water, Sisuthrus sent out some birds. Since they could find no food or place to rest their feet, they returned to Sisuthrus. After waiting a few more days, he sent the birds out a second time. This time when they returned their feet were covered with mud. Sisuthrus knew that the flood had not completely ended. When he sent the birds out a third time they did not return, so Sisuthrus interpreted that as a sign that the surface of the earth was above the waters.

Sisuthrus and all the animal inhabitants of the boat were eager to leave. Upon departing the boat, they were surprised to see that they were situated on the side of a mountain. Sisuthrus was so happy to see the ground once again that he built an altar and, along with his wife, children, and the pilot, offered sacrifices to the gods. Once they had all paid homage to the gods, they disappeared. The others who remained on the boat grew concerned when Sisuthrus and his family did not return. As they left the boat they called upon Sisuthrus, but they could not find him. However, they could hear his voice as he admonished the remaining people to pay their due respects to the gods. Sisuthrus also informed the survivors that it was due to his piety that he and his family and the pilot were all transformed to live with the gods. To those left behind Sisuthrus instructed them to make their way to Babylonia and search for the writings at Sippara which were to be made known to all mankind. Having heard these words, the people left Armenia, where the boat had come to rest, and journeyed toward Babylonia. There they found the writings at Sippara and set about building cities and erecting temples. Once again Babylonia prospered.

## III. A Story from India

*Comment:*

*The first record of a deluge story in India is found in Setapatha Brahmana, an important collection of prose concerned with sacred ritual. This work is believed to have been written not long before the rise of Buddhism and, therefore, not later than the sixth century B.C. An even more modern version of the great flood story comes from the Komars, a small Dravidian tribe of the Raipur District in the Central Provinces of India. The legend relates how the caste system began.*

## Destruction of the Jackal

In the beginning of time God created a very special man and a very special woman. To this couple in their old age, God sent two children, a boy and a girl. While the children were still quite young, God had become angered by a jackal who had displeased him. God's anger became so intensified by this creature that he decided to destroy the whole earth by sending a flood.

When the old couple heard about the deluge that was to take place they devised a scheme that would save their children from destruction. They found a hollowed-out tree and put the children in it with enough food and provisions for the duration of the flood. Then they closed up the

trunk and not any too quickly, because it started to rain. For the next twelve years it rained. During this time the old couple and every living thing on earth were drowned, but the tree trunk containing the children remained safe as it continued to float on the water. At the end of twelve years, God created two birds and sent them to see if his enemy the jackal had been destroyed. Flying over every corner of the earth, the birds saw nothing but the log of wood floating on the surface of the water. The birds flew down and rested themselves upon it. Soon they heard low feeble voices coming from inside the trunk. Amazingly it was the children saying they had enough provisions to last them three more days. The birds quickly returned to God and told Him what they had seen. God caused the rains to cease, and the waters began to subside. After removing the children from the log, he listened to their story and brought them up. In time the grown children were married, and as each child was born to them, He gave each one the name of a different caste. It is said that from them all the inhabitants of the world are descended.

## IV. A Story from the Masai

*Comment:*

*Although legends and tales of a universal flood story spread all over the world, it is interesting to note that very few are to be found in all of Africa. Research has shown that it is doubtful that any single genuinely native tradition of a great flood has ever been recorded throughout the continent. However, in East Africa, German writers discovered among the natives a flood story with strong influences from either Christian or Mohammedan teachings. The following story is similar to one recorded by a German officer among the Masai.*

## An Ark, a Flood, and Four Rainbows

Long ago in East Africa lived a very righteous man whom God loved very much. This man's name was Tumbainot. God had blessed Tumbainot with a lovely wife named Naipande, who bore him three sons, Oshomo, Bartimaro, and Barmo. After his brother died, he married his brother's widow, which was according to Masai custom. His second wife's name was Nahabe-Iogunja, which was given to her because of her high, narrow head, a mark of beauty among the Masai. She also bore him three sons. However, they did not get along very well with his first family, so she moved away from his home



and established a separate home nearby, with a hedge of thorn bushes separating them.

During this time the world was heavily populated, but people could not get along with one another. Although they committed many sins against each other and God, still no one ever committed murder. All this changed, however, the day a man named Nambija knocked another man named Suage on the head and killed him. This was more than God could bear, to think that one man could kill another. God became so angry that he decided to destroy the whole human race.

Because of Tumbainot's pious lifestyle, God looked down upon him favorably and wanted to save him and his family from the devastation that was soon to take place. So, God commanded Tumbainot to build an ark of wood that would be large enough for himself, his two wives, his six sons and their wives, as well as animals of every sort. Once the ark was built and Tumbainot, his family, and the animals were on it with provisions to last them through their journey, God caused a rain so heavy and so long that a great flood resulted. Every man, woman, child, and beast were drowned, except those that were safe in the ark; for the ark was able to float on the water.

Tumbainot hoped that the rain would soon stop, because the food for his family, as well as for the animals, was diminishing. When at last the rain stopped, Tumbainot let a

dove fly out of the ark to see if there was any dry land. That evening the dove came back tired, so Tumbainot knew that the water must still be so high that the dove could find no place to rest. Tumbainot waited several more days before he decided to let a vulture fly from the ark. Before doing so, he fastened an arrow to one of its tail-feathers, figuring that if the bird perched to eat, it would trail the arrow behind it, and that the arrow, catching onto something as it dragged over the ground, would stick fast and be lost. That evening, the vulture returned without the arrow and the tail-feather. Cleverly Tumbainot inferred that the vulture had landed on something and the flood was subsiding. In time the ark came to rest upon a mountain, and the people and the animals disembarked. As he stepped out of the ark, Tumbainot saw four rainbows, one in each of the four quarters of the sky. This he took as a sign that the wrath of God was over.

#### V. A Story from the Aborigines of Australia

##### *Comment:*

*Legends from Australia concerning a great flood are few in number. The Aborigines of Victoria and South Australia are the original inhabitants of this island continent. The legends and myths coming from the Aborigines deal mostly with the beginnings of their race. The Kurnai, an*

*aboriginal tribe from Gippsland in Victoria, give this explanation for a great flood. Bunjil, a pelican was known as the Creator to the Aborigines. The flood myth explains why pelicans are black and white.*

#### Why Pelicans Are Black and White

Long ago the Creator, Bundjel, was very angry with black people because they did so much evil. In order to punish them he sent a great amount of rain that caused the ocean to overflow, which made the waters rise until the entire earth was covered. Everyone was drowned except for a man and three women whom Bundjel loved very much. They escaped the deluge by taking refuge on a mud island near Port Albert with water all around them. Not long after, Bunjil Borun, the pelican, came sailing by in his canoe to see if he could help the stranded people. One of the women was so beautiful that the pelican fell in love with her immediately. When she started to get into the canoe, Bunjel Borun told her to wait and he would pick her up on a return trip. He ferried all of the others to the mainland and left her until last. The woman, though, was afraid to be left alone with the ferryman, so she decided to risk her safety and swam ashore to safety.

The woman was not only beautiful, but she was clever as well. Before leaving the island, she devised a plan to

trick the pelican. She dressed up a log in her opossum rug and laid it near the fire so that it looked just like herself. When the pelican arrived to ferry her back to the mainland he could not awaken what he thought was the woman wrapped up in the opossum rug. When the log did not respond he nudged it with his foot. However, when he kicked it harder the second time he only hurt his foot. The pelican flew into a rage, angered by the trick that had been played on him.

He began to paint himself white in preparation for fighting the husband of the impudent woman who had tricked him. He was only half finished painting his black body when another pelican came by, and, not knowing what to make of such a strange creature, half-white and half-black, he pecked at him with his beak until the two-colored pelican was dead. That is why today pelicans are black and white. Before the flood they were black all over.

As for the man and the three women who survived the flood, they went on to populate the earth, and mankind was restored.

## VI. A Story from Lithuania

*Comment:*

*Little has been preserved in European literature concerning a universal or widespread flood. The most common*

*stories of such a deluge come from the ancient Greeks, even though there are few similarities between the motifs found in the Greek versions and the motifs found in the Hebrew versions. What few stories that have survived in Europe usually involve giants who represent water and wind. In addition, tales from the far North, such as Iceland or Norway, involve not only giants but also the destruction of mankind from the face of the earth due to drowning in the blood from slain giants. A legend about the great flood in Lithuania has survived the ages.*

#### The Escape in a Giant Nutshell

One day the great god Pramzima was looking out the window of his heavenly home, surveying the activities of his people on earth. What he saw was terribly disturbing to him, because all he could see was war and wrong-doing among his people. He decided to send two giants Wandu, who was Water, and Wejas, who was Wind, down to the sinful earth to destroy it. After twenty days and twenty nights of their raging behavior, very little was left of the earth. Water kept rising, even over the mountain tops.

Now Pramzima was very fond of nuts and as good luck would have it, he was eating them one day as he looked out his window to see if his plan to destroy mankind was working. As he ate the nuts, he threw the shells out the

window, and they fell to the earth below. One of the shells fell on top of the highest mountain, where a few pairs of humans and animals sought refuge from the flood. The people were very happy to see the giant nutshell because they immediately turned it over and climbed in to escape the deluge. At this critical moment Pramzima looked out his window a third time. Convinced that the surviving humans were remorseful about their wicked ways, he ordered the wind to fall and the water to subside. So a small fragment of mankind was saved and they dispersed over the earth. Only one couple remained on top of the mountain, and it is said that from them the Lithuanians are descended. The couple, however, was very old, and they were quite upset by all that had happened to the entire earth as a result of the deluge. As a way to make them feel better, Pramzima sent them a rainbow which advised them to jump over the bones of the earth nine times. Since they had nothing better to do, the old couple took the advice of the rainbow and jumped nine times. Each time they jumped a new couple sprang up from the bones of the earth. These nine couples then became the ancestors of the nine tribes of Lithuania.

## VII. A Story from the Caddo Indians of North America

*Comment:*

*The Caddo belonged to a confederacy of tribes which also included the Wichita, the Kichai, the Arikara, and the Pawnees. Members of Coronado's expedition (1541) were the first to mention the Caddos, who were mostly sedentary planters and lived in large dome-shaped, thatched-grass huts. These people were once scattered throughout Oklahoma, the Red River area of Arkansas, and northern Texas. Eventually about 500 surviving Caddos were settled with the Wichitas in Indian Territory, now known as Oklahoma.*

*Throughout much Native American literature, several common elements are found. In this legend handed down from the Caddos, the hero, Turtle, and the sacred four directions, North, South, East, and West, are evident.*

*The Voice, the Flood, and the Turtle*

Many moons ago the wife of a chief gave birth to four little monsters whom the people feared. At the council meeting the elders voiced their opinion that these strange children would surely bring great misfortune to their tribe. The elders agreed that it would be better to kill the children right then for everyone's sake. However, their mother was very much alarmed at this proposal and pleaded

that they not be killed, believing that her children would eventually become normal.

However, the little monsters did not turn out all right. In fact, they grew much faster than ordinary children and became very big. They each had four arms and four legs. They hurt other children, they upset tipis, they tore up buffalo robes, and they contaminated people's food.

A wise man who could see things in his mind which had not yet happened said, "Kill these strange things before they kill you."

But their mother said, "Never. They'll be fine young men some day."

Unfortunately they never became fine young men; instead they started killing and eating people. The men in the village tried to stop them, but it was too late. The monsters had become too big and powerful to kill.

The monsters grew taller and taller. One day they went to the middle of the village and stood back to back, one facing north, one facing south, one facing east, and one facing west. Their backs grew together, and they became one.

The people had a difficult time escaping the monsters. There were some who took refuge near the monster's feet because the huge creature could not bend down and pick them up. However, the people who lived further away were



snatched up by the monsters' mile-long arms, killed, and eaten. It did not take long for the four monsters to grow together and become one. As they grew taller they rose to reach the clouds, and their heads could reach the sky.

Not long after, the man who could see into the future heard a voice telling him to hollow out a reed and set it in the ground. No sooner had the man done this than the reed began to get bigger and bigger until it reached the sky. The voice spoke to the man one more time and said that there would be a great flood to punish the monsters. The man was told that once he saw signs that bad things were coming, he and his wife were to climb into the hollow reed. Further, the voice told the man that they were to enter the reed naked just as they were born, but that also the man was to take a pair of good animals in order to save them. The man was curious as to what the sign would be.

The voice answered, "When all the birds in the world-birds of the woods, the sea, the deserts, and the high mountains-form up into a cloud flying from north to south, that will be the sign. Watch for the cloud of birds."

Before long a cloud of birds traveling from north to south was making its way across the sky. Quickly the man and his wife, along with all the animals that they were going to save, moved up into the hollow reed.

Soon it began to rain, and the rains came down so hard and so fast that the waters covered the whole earth and kept rising until only the top of the giant hollow reed and the heads of the monsters were above the surface.

Once more the voice spoke to the man and the woman. He told them not to be afraid because he was going to send Turtle, who would destroy the monsters.

The monsters were getting very tired, and their legs were getting shaky. They didn't think that they could stand much longer. The flood waters were swirling around them, and the current became so strong that the monsters were almost swept away. The Great Turtle began digging under their feet so that the monsters lost their footing, falling over into the water and breaking apart from each other. When they fell into the water, one fell toward the north, one toward the south, one toward the east, and one toward the west. This is how the four directions were formed.

Once the monsters drowned, the water began to go down, and the mountaintops began to appear and finally the land. When the man thought it was safe he climbed down from the hollow cane and opened the door at its foot. He felt around with his hand, and, much to his delight, the ground was dry. Excitedly the man and his wife emerged from the reed, followed by all the animals. As soon as they were out, the reed collapsed and disappeared. When they stepped out on

the ground they realized that nothing was growing on the earth. The wife became worried because they were naked with no means of survival.

To soothe his wife's fears the man told her to lie down and go to sleep. When the couple woke up the next morning, lush plants had grown up around them. The second night while they slept trees and bushes grew. They were very happy, for now they had wood for fires to keep them warm and all sorts of wood to make bows and arrows and other tools. Then on the third night, grass grew, and animals appeared to graze on it.

Then on the fourth night, when the man and woman went to sleep, they awoke to find a grass hut around them. Outside the hut was a stalk of corn. The voice spoke to them and said, "This will be your holy food. Now you have everything you need. Now you can live. Now you will have children and form a new generation. If you, woman, should plant corn, and something other than corn comes up, then know that the world will come to its end."

From that time on, they never heard the voice again.

#### VIII. A Story from the Inuits

*Comment:*

*Preservation of their heritage has been an important element of the Inuits' way of life. Since they were unable*

to record their history because they had no means of writing, Inuits handed down their stories from one generation to the next through storytelling. The old people taught the young the wisdom of their fathers. When autumn came everyone gathered in the singing house, which was larger than other houses, for the contests of storytelling and singing. As the leader took his place in the center of the room, the rest of the people arranged themselves about him, the men on one side and the women on the other. The ancient songs or "okalugtaut" which tell the history were first. If the singer forgets or makes a mistake, the older ones correct him. This was the link between generations. Newer songs and stories which are only several hundred years old are told next with present-day stories that have just been written during the past year. Each person performs his own new story for the others, hoping it will be good enough to be an "okalualarutit" that will be sung by many future generations. The following is such a song.

#### A Sign of Peace

At one time very long ago, when the earth and sky could almost touch one another, there was a great village with many people. Unfortunately, the people in this village were very noisy. There was noise all the time. At night the

adults made a lot of noise dancing and singing, but then would want to sleep all day. On the other hand, the children would sleep at night, but all day, every day, they would dance and sing loudly.

The Chief of the Heavens became angry with the people because they were so noisy. He was unable to get sleep, day or night. Finally, the Chief of the Heavens had had enough. He was tired of hearing so much noise, so he decided to punish the people by flooding all the rivers and all the lakes and all the oceans. The water kept rising and rising and finally covered all of the land. The people were terrified as the water continued to get deeper and deeper. Many of the people got into their canoes to escape or tried to climb up on the mountains. Unfortunately, only a few of the people escaped because the water kept rising and rising with only the highest mountain peaks poking through. The people in the canoes were left to drift for many days.

The eagles got together and devised a plan to help save the people and animals that were stranded on the mountain peaks or left drifting in their canoes. The eagles decided to shed their feathers on the water, in hopes that the Chief of the Heavens would see this as a sign of peace and cause the waters to recede.

It was an amazing sight. For once the eagles began shedding their feathers on the water other birds followed

and shed their feathers, too. Before too long, the water was covered with downy feathers from all the birds.

The Chief of the Heavens was very pleased with this sacrifice and accepted it as a sign of peace. It wasn't too long before the waters began to go down until they were back the way they used to be.

Once the people realized that it was safe, they came down from the mountains and got out of their canoes and began to build new villages. Because they had drifted so far from their old homes, they established new tribes and villages in all parts of the world.

The people learned some great lessons from the flood, and they never forgot the magic of the downy feathers of the eagle. To this day it has always been a sign of peace. Whenever there is a war or an argument, if the chief holds the down in his hand and blows the feathers into the air, he is expressing a promise of peace.

#### IX. A Story from the Chiriguanos

*Comment:*

*South America is the most isolated of the inhabited continents with the exception of Australia. Its folklore and mythology have developed independently from those of the rest of the world. However, the idea of a world flood and the theft of fire are two elements found in South American*

*folklore. In some South American tribal folklore, the mythic flood, which is said to have covered the earth serves as a turning point, marks the beginning of the world as we know it today. The Chiriguanos were once a powerful tribe in southern Bolivia. Their version of the great flood story helps explain how fire was recovered after the deluge.*

#### How Fire Was Preserved During the Deluge

Long ago the gods of the Chiriguano people were very upset with one another. The name of the true and creator god was Tunpaete, while the untrue god's name was Auguara-Tunpa. It is unclear why Auguara-Tunpa declared war on Tunpaete, but it is believed that the bad god just wanted to start a fight because he was so cantankerous by nature. To anger the creator god, Auguara-Tunpa set fire to all the prairies in early autumn to destroy not only the plants and trees that the Chiriguano Indians depended on for survival, but animals as well. At this time the people had not yet learned how to cultivate maize and other grains. Deprived of food, the Indians nearly died of hunger. Fortunately, they discovered that they could survive on the fish that lived in the nearby river. Auguara-Tunpa was very angry to see that his plot to destroy Tunpaete's people was not going to work, so he had to devise another plan. He caused the torrential rains to fall from heaven, hoping to cause a

flood that would drown all the Chiriguano people. He was almost successful, but the Chiriguanos were very smart and devised a plan to save their race. The true god Tunpaete had advised them to look for a large leaf and to place two babies, a boy and a girl, upon it. This tiny ark with its precious cargo was able to float upon the water. The rains continued to fall until the waters covered the entire earth and drowned all of the Chiriguanos except the two babies who remained safe on the large leaf. Finally the rains ceased and the flood subsided, leaving the earth looking like a giant mud field. The children were able to emerge from their ark, and they were cold and hungry.

The fish and all the creatures that lived in the water were able to survive the flood. In fact they actually enjoyed it, so they were now willing to act as food for the children. However, it was unknown how the babies were going to be able to cook the fish, because all the fire on earth had been extinguished by the flood.

Fortunately a large toad came to their rescue. Prior to the great deluge, this smart-thinking creature thought to hide himself away in a hole, taking with him in his mouth some live coals, keeping them alight during the entire flood by blowing on them with his breath. This was not an easy task to perform, so he was delighted when he saw the waters subsiding and was able to emerge from his hole. With the



hot coals in his mouth he hopped right over to the children, dropping the gift of fire at their feet. The children were so happy because they not only were able to cook the fish that they had caught, but they were also able to warm their chilled bodies.

Time passed, and the children grew up and fell in love. From them the Chiriguano tribe was reborn, and they had many descendants.

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