

Pass ————— good effort
no vocab. list

A LEGEND: THE HERO TWINS AND THE SWALLOWER OF CLOUDS

Virginia Beavert

Legend about Water

April 15, 1994

When the world was young, they say, a giant lived in the cliffs above the canyon. The food he lived on was human beings, and he caught the clouds and squeezed them into his mouth to drink. The people called him "Swallower of Clouds." The bravest of men tried to destroy him. When they went out to kill him, they were never seen again. Before long he was swallowing all of the clouds, and the snow stopped falling to the north. Because he swallowed all of the clouds, the rain no longer came from the west. The mist from above the mountains to the east disappeared. Because he swallowed all of the clouds, the springs to the south dried up. The people were suffering and some began to die.

The Hero Twins saw what was happening.

"We will go and kill Swallower of Clouds," they said. Then they started on their way to the cliffs where he lived. But as they were following the path to the cliffs, they saw a spider web next to the trail.

"Grandmother Spider," they said, greeting the maker of webs,

"Are you well?"

"I am well Grandchildren," said spider, "Where are you going?"

"We are going to kill the giant, Swallower of Clouds," they said.

"That is good," Grandmother Spider said, "but first let me warn you. The giant has a trick. He stretches himself out on top of the cliffs. He pretends to be sleeping and then he tells whoever comes to pass...to pass under his legs, which are arched over the trail. As soon as someone passes under, though, he grabs them and throws them over the cliff.

"Grandmother Spider," said the Twins, "what should we do?"

"Let me go ahead of you," said Grandmother Spider, "Wait for a while and then follow."

Then Grandmother Spider set out. She did not go far before she came to the giant. He was stretched out on top of the cliff with his legs over the trail. He was as huge as a hill and his legs were bigger than tree trunks. He pretended to sleep, for he heard the Hero Twins were coming to fight him. Grandmother Spider was so small the giant did not see her. She climbed up a rock behind him and then let herself down on his forehead with a strand of silk. While he kept his eyes closed, pretending to sleep, she wove her web across his eyes so that he could not open them.

Now the Hero Twins having waited for a while, started on their way. When they came close to the place where Swallower of Clouds lay, they began to sing their war song.

"Who is that?" said Swallower of Clouds as the Hero Twins came closer, "I am old and tired, too old and tired to move out of the way. Just pass under my legs."

But when the Hero Twins came close to the giant they split up. One ran to the right and one ran to the left. The giant tried to open his eyes to see what they were doing, but he was blinded by the spider web.

"Where are you Little Ones?" he asked, striking and missing

the Twins. "Just pass under my legs."

Swallower of Clouds struck again at the Hero Twins, but he could not see them and he missed. Then the Twins leaped up and struck him with their clubs. One struck him in the head. The other struck him in the stomach. They killed the Swallower of Clouds with their clubs. Then they threw him over the same cliff where he had thrown all the people he killed. Now the clouds were able to pass again fthrough the mountains. The snow returned to the north. The rain came again from the west. The mist formed once more above the mountains to the east. The springs to the south flowed once more. Again the food for the people grew and the people were happy.

It is said that when the giant fell, he struck so hard that his feet drove into the Earth. He still stands there to this day with his blood dried red all along his great stiff body. Though the people call this stone by other names, it is known by others as Swallower of Clouds. When people look at this stone, they are thankful for the deed of the Hero Twins, Grandmother Spider and the life-giving rain.

DISCUSSION: Drought is a serious, life threatening problem in the many regions of the world, including Indian lands in the United States.

The loss of water rights arises in the story. Who owns the water? This is a serious problem when people living downstream must accept the consequences of the water use practice upstream communities. Some of the activities in this story explore the issues of water supply, waste-water treatment and conservation of fresh water.

Rain is part of water cycle. In this continous cycle, water falls from the clouds as rain and is then evaporated from the land, plants, animals, rivers and lakes by the sun's energy. This water then condenses as clouds that rain down on the land once again. Some water enters the ground water stores and may remain there for anywhere from a short time to many years. Water is the great Oglallala aquifer, underlying the Great Plains in the western United States, and is only renewable when considered in terms of geologic time, yet we are using it up in decades.

In mountainous areas, air masses travel up the slopes, the air cools and moisture condenses to form clouds. As a result, there is a lot of rain that falls on the windward sides of mountains.

The surface water that collects in lakes, pools, rivers and wetlands is full of life in abundance and variety of plants and animals depend on these habitats to live. These organisms must be adapted to life conditions in fresh water: oxygen levels, temperature, pH (acid, neutral or alkaline conditions), availability of food, water quality and water movement are all important. Plant and animal adaptations must enable them to perform all or some of these vital functions to live:

a. exchanging gases; b. moving; c. finding the right temperature; d. maintaining correct body fluid; e. getting nourishment; f. excreting waste; g. reproducing; h. surviving in adaptation of seasonal changes.

QUESTIONS:1. How would you describe the character of the Cloud Swallower? Why do the Indians believe that the horrible monster is taking the water when it disappears during a drought?
2. The Hero Twins defeat the Cloud Swallower because they cooperate with Grandmother Spider. What does it mean to cooperate? Why is this a good way to do things?
3. What are some of the terrible things that happen when there is no rain? In what way is water so important to living things?
4. Is there enough water in your neighborhood? Where does your water come from?
5. Can anyone own water? Would you take water that someone else needs? How would you feel and what would you do if someone began to take the water you need to live?
6. Where does the water go to once you have used it? Is there an unlimited supply of water in the world? What could you do to conserve your water supply?

ASSIGNMENT:From the legend, translate English words to Sahaptin and put the words on 3 x 5 cardex file cards and alphabetize. Use the words you have in your collection and in the dictionary. This is a long legend. Select words you have in your collection only. I don't expect you to translate the entire legend word for word. We are emphasizing penmanship, writing ability, and word translation.

On a sheet of paper answer the QUESTION portion. Use as many Indian words as possible to explain your answers.

For example: How would you describe the Cloud Swallower?

Answer: Nuk'inla shwat'ashnan. Swallower of Cloud.

Why do the Indians believe the horrible monster is taking the water during a drought?

Answer: Tiinma pawiykwishtika. Indians did something wrong.

wiya-kwishtik- means: "step off the good road."
" to do wrong"