

NEW WORDS:

fly pipe
spiritually
sacred
physically
cleansing
sweat lodge
regretted
impatient
sacrifice

GHOST WOMAN

Skull Story and Ghost Woman

Developed by the Blackfeet Tribe

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA: Plains Region

STORY TYPE(S): Indian Values

Summary:

Coyote Man's wife got very sick and died, leaving him and his son to grieve for her. Coyote Man traveled to Big Sands, the land of spirits, to see if he could have his wife returned. Upon reaching Big Sands, he was shown a sacred ceremony which cleansed his wife spiritually and physically in order that she could return. Before leaving, Coyote Man was cautioned about showing respect for his wife; never should he call her Ghost Woman or lazy. Upon his arrival in camp the sacred fly pipe ceremony was repeated and Coyote Man and his wife lived happily for some time. Eventually, however, he forgot his warning and became impatient with her, calling her the names he had been warned against. His wife ran to her bed, and Coyote Man found nothing but a skeleton left.

Often one does not realize how great a gift friendship is until it is lost. Coyote Man was given a second chance to honor someone he loved dearly. As is easy to do, however, he took his loved one for granted and failed to show the respect he should have. He was punished for his quick temper and disrespect.

The fly pipe ceremony and sweat lodge are seen in this story as having great powers to cleanse and purify and should be recognized as a sacred way in which some Indian people worship.

Teacher Guided Activities:



1. Compare this story to *A Young Warrior*. Both stories point out what kind of behavior is expected of a man when making a commitment to a woman. A woman is not a possession, nor does she become an object of abuse in marriage or friendship. Discuss how tradition had led to role stereo-typing.

Review classroom responsibilities as they exist. Are boys doing traditional male tasks and are girls doing traditional female tasks? Is there a need to switch roles or tasks? Reassign tasks after evaluating the situation, if necessary.



2. Have students individually draw what they think Big Sand might look like. How might this compare with ideas of heaven and hell? Have students fantasize where they might like to go after they leave this world.

Perhaps a group of students could collaborate on a mural using their own ideas. Different types of music could be used to set the mood for good and bad places to go after death. Encourage students to be creative.



3. Have students make a travelogue of all the things seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled on Coyote Man's journey to Big Sand. Some may wish to draw a map with directions.

Student Activity Card(s):

See Women of Wonder Activity Card (18A-18B).