

# NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE:

# Culture & Innovation

## Traditional Stories and Tales

Many traditional American Indian stories have been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years. Sometimes these stories help explain something about the world around us, like why animals act a certain way or how the earth was created. Other stories might help explain the history of the tribe or family, or they might be used to teach children a valuable lesson. These traditional tales would be repeated over and over by members of the tribe, especially to the young children. Since many tribal languages were spoken languages, meaning they did not have a written form, most of these stories were passed down through oral storytelling. This tradition of telling stories aloud became a very important part of the tribal culture for many American Indians.

### Tell Your Story

We all have stories that our families share with one another. Maybe it is a story about a family member. Perhaps it is a story cautioning children from making the mistakes of their parents. In this activity, you will need to think about the stories that your family likes to tell.

1. Think about a story that your family likes to tell.
2. Write it down just as you remember it.
3. Share these stories with the rest of your class or in small groups.
4. Listen to each story and try to determine why the family might have told that story. For example, maybe it is a story about their past or reminding their children to behave.

### Why Does the Rabbit Have a Short Tail?

A traditional tale of the Choctaw tribe tells the story of why rabbits have short tails. In this activity, you will come up with your own story about why rabbits' tails are short.



1. Teacher: have students work either individually or in small groups. Read them the Choctaw version of why rabbits have short tails. This story can be found in the Native American Heritage: Culture and Innovation workbook.
2. Create a story that could explain why rabbits have short tails.
3. Each group/student shares story with the class.
4. Vote on the very best story of the class.

Visit <http://bit.ly/1knGmg7> to access the student workbook.

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