

Star stories

Topic

stories from indigenous peoples, constellations

Aims

- To raise awareness of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on 9 August
- To talk about how people have always found animals in the patterns in the night sky
- To discuss two stories learned by indigenous children on different continents about dark constellations
- To develop learners' speaking, observation and collaboration skills
- To provide learners with an opportunity to explore the knowledge of indigenous cultures
- To practise the present and past simple when completing a text
- To practise the present simple when describing the patterns learners can see in the night sky

Age/level

Young learners aged 9-12 years
CEFR level B1

Time

55 – 75 minutes

Materials

- worksheet – Cut into two pieces (one per learner or pair)
- Reading (one per learner or pair)
- Presentation – This can replace the worksheet
- an image of the Milky Way

Optional materials

- images of local star constellations
- images of the emu and the snake dark constellations
- Card and coloured pencils or felt tips for making posters

Introduction

This lesson can be used to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples at any time of the year. August 9 is the day we celebrate the people of the world who live in traditional ways and who speak their own languages. Two indigenous peoples are the Australian Aborigines and the Quechua

people of the Andes region of South America. The Quechua people are related to the Incas, an important civilisation of the past.

The stories in the text show two cultures where the starless spaces in the sky, called dark constellations, were used to identify objects. The stories relate to the emu and the snake. Learners first learn the key vocabulary and then complete the text with the missing words. Afterwards, learners look for other patterns in the night sky and invent explanations or stories to accompany them.

Procedure

Before the lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download and make a copy of the worksheet (one per learner or group). • Find an image of the Milky Way to display on a screen in class (or print out if you don't have access to a screen). <p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are going to show learners the star constellations visible where you live, open the website https://in-the-sky.org/skymap2.php or print out pictures in advance if you don't have internet access. • If you are going to ask learners to try to identify the emu and the snake, find and print out pictures in advance.
1. Warmer (10–15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the topic by telling the learners that the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is celebrated on 9 August. Display slide 2. Ask learners if they know anything about cultures where people still live in traditional ways and what kinds of things they do. <p>Suggested ideas (shown on slide 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — They grow their own food, fish and hunt — They build their own houses and make their own clothes, They don't use cars — They are knowledgeable about the land they live on — They understand the seasons and what they have available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to learners about how people have always told each other stories while sitting around the fire at night. Ask them to imagine what it was like to live in the dark, with the big sky full of stars above them. What did people think or see when they looked at the stars?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can display slide 4 or show learners a picture of the Milky Way and ask them to describe it. What can they see? Do they see any patterns in the stars? Tell learners that a pattern of stars is called a 'constellation'. <p>Note: You might like to show learners pictures of the night sky where you live and see if they can identify any constellations. This website shows the sky from your location (in the display options, select only 'stars', then select 'stick figures' and 'names' to reveal the constellations):</p> <p>https://in-the-sky.org/skymap2.php</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now point to the dark parts in the picture of the Milky Way. Explain that while we use the stars to find patterns, some indigenous people use the dark parts. We call these dark constellations.
2. Vocabulary (20 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give each learner (or group) the worksheet and ask them to cover the descriptions of the words on the right-hand side of the page. Go through the vocabulary together, describing what each word or phrase means. Once you have elicited definitions of the key words, ask them to match them to the descriptions in the right-hand column. <p>Alternative – if using the presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display slide 5. Ask learners to work in pairs and discuss the meaning of the nine words and collocations. Elicit a few ideas from learners, then display slide 6. Ask learners to match the new vocabulary with its definition. <p>Answers (on slide 7)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Australia (2) South America (7) the Milky Way (1) a star constellation (9) a dark constellation (4) the Aborigines (8) the Incas (5) an emu (6) a snake (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once learners understand the vocabulary, get them to read the text in pairs or groups, putting the missing words in the gapped text. Share images of the emu and the snake if you have them.

<p>Reading (10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask learners to read the text in pairs, putting the missing words in the gapped text. • Elicit the answers. <p>Tip: You might like to find images featuring the emu and the snake and ask learners if they can see them.</p> <p>Answers (also on slides 8 and 9): A group of stars make a pattern called a constellation. People saw many different objects in the constellations, for example, animals like fish, birds, lions, dogs and bears. The animals move in the sky because the Earth is always turning. The Milky Way looks white in the night sky because we can see many stars in it. Because it is white, the Aborigines of Australia and the Incas of South America looked at the dark spaces to find the patterns. These patterns are called dark constellations. In Australia, Aborigines show their children the Emu in the Sky. In March, April and May, the emu is lying down with two eggs next to her. She is the mother, and this is the when the eggs are good to eat. People take the eggs, but they leave some for the emus. In June and July, the emu is looking down. The emu is now the father, and the eggs are going to hatch. Now people start to leave the eggs because the babies are growing inside them. Because of the Emu in the Sky, the people know when to take the emu eggs and when to leave them. Children also learn that the father is the one who looks after the babies. The Incas saw a big snake in the dark part of the Milky Way. In August, the head of the snake appears. In November and December, the whole snake is in the sky. This is also when the snakes come out from the Andes mountains. In February the snake in the sky starts to disappear. The snakes on Earth go back to the mountains at the same time that the big snake in the sky disappears.</p>
<p>3. Follow-up (10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask learners to look at your image of the Milky Way once again. In pairs, they look for animals or objects in the image. Each pair comes to the front of the class and says, for example, 'We can see a (fish / balloon).' The other learners try to guess where it is. They could ask, 'Is it made of stars? Is it made from the dark spaces?'
<p>4. Creative work (10–20 minutes) OPTIONAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners draw their animal or object. With their partner, they then invent an explanation for their constellation. For example, if they drew a fish, they could say

	<p>it means that when their fish ‘swims’ across the sky, this is a good time to go fishing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterwards, learners mingle and show each other their pictures, guessing what they mean. • Pairs are joined to make groups. They make a poster about their constellations
Extension activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For homework, learners could look up at the night sky to find the moon, planets and stars. Tell learners which constellations they should look for in their locality. • Find more stories from indigenous peoples to tell the learners. • Learn about the Greek stories based on the constellations in the sky.
Useful links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about constellations: https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/constellation/352995 • Greek myths about constellations: https://www.theoi.com/greek-mythology/star-myths.html • Find constellations in your locality: https://in-the-sky.org/skymap2.php • Stories from indigenous Americans: https://www.sciencefriday.com/articles/indigenous-peoples-astronomy/

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