

Lesson 1.2

GLUSKAP STORY SKITS

Objective: Students will read and analyze a Gluskap story, discussing the values it demonstrates. They will then perform a dramatized version of the story for their classmates.

Materials:

- **Sheet 1.2:** Gluskap¹ Story Skits student worksheet
- **Doc 1.2A:** "Glooskap Defeats his Brother Malsum the Wolf"
- **Doc 1.2B:** "Gluskap Tempers the Wind"
- **Doc 1.2C:** "Gluskabe's Childhood and Gluskabe Releases the Game Animals"
- **Doc 1.2D:** "Gluskap Makes Man and the Animals"
- **Doc 1.2E:** "Gluskap is Defeated by the Mighty Wasis"

Timing: Three to four class periods

Background Reading: Chapter One, Section Two

Procedure:

1. Break students into four or five groups. Give each group one of the Gluskap stories and the story worksheet.
2. Have each group read through their story, underline any words they don't understand, look them up, and discuss the story together as a group before filling out the worksheet. You may want to give each student a specific role, so that one student does not dominate the discussion, i.e., recorder, facilitator, timekeeper, presenter. Each group should show their worksheet to you before preparing their presentation.
3. Every student should have a role to play in the presentation. If necessary, groups may choose to have a narrator, who reads or tells the story to the class as the rest of the group acts it out. Students should prepare a skit that follows the narration of the story. Give students at least a full class period to practice their skits, as well as time outside of class.
4. Students present their story-skits to the class.
5. After the presentations are finished, hold a discussion with the whole class. Some suggested questions:
 - What are these stories about?
 - What are some of the morals to these stories? What values seem to be important?

¹ These stories were traditionally told orally; as a result, there are many variations on the spelling of Gluskap. Glooskap, Koluscap, and Gluskabe are a few variations.

- What do you think each of these stories might say about the Wabanaki culture it came from?
- Are there any stories you remember from your childhood that are similar to these?

Evaluation: Assess student skits based on the demonstrated understanding of the stories, and the imaginative effort of the groups. Give students both a group grade and an individual grade.

Follow-up activity:

- Portfolio option: Have students write their own story to represent the values of their own present-day culture.
- Have them find more Wabanaki stories at the library and bring them to class.

Note: Gluskap stories are intended to be told out loud; therefore, something is lost when they're read on paper. Most of the stories here come from Charles Leland's 1884 *Algonquin Legends of New England*. Leland altered the language of many of these stories to make them appeal to a 19th century literary readership. Some of the wording in these stories has been changed to make it easier for middle school students to read them.

If you are interested in exploring the Gluskap stories further, I would suggest calling in a Native storyteller to give the students the experience of hearing one of these stories told. Contact one of the Wabanaki tribal offices for information about Native storytellers:

Penobscot Nation official website: www.penobscotnation.org

Passamaquoddy at Princeton website: www.passamaquoddy.com

Passamaquoddy tribal government site at Pleasant Point: www.wabanaki.com

Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians: www.maliseets.com

Aroostook Band of Micmacs: www.micmac-nsn.gov

University of Maine Wabanaki and Native Studies program: www.naps.umaine.edu

Alignment with Learning Results:

Grade Level: **6th-8th**

Content Area: Social Studies: **HISTORY**

Standard: **Individual, Cultural, International, and Global Connections in History**

Students understand historical aspects of unity and diversity in Maine, the United States, and various world cultures, including Maine Native Americans.

Descriptor **E2a**: Explain how both unity and diversity have had important roles in the history of Maine, the United States, and other nations.

Grade Level: **6th-8th**

Content Area: English Language Arts: **READING**

Standard: **Literary Texts**

Performance Indicator **A2**: Students read fiction, non-fiction, drama, and poetry, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, and analyze the characteristics noting how structural features and common literary devices help shape the reader's response.

Name: _____

Date: _____

GLUSKAP STORY SKITS

Story Title: _____

Group Members: _____

Discuss these questions with your entire group and agree on your answers before writing them in the spaces provided below. When you have finished, show your paper to your teacher. Then begin practicing your skit.

1. Name the important characters in your group's story.

2. Give a short summary of your group's story below. What are the main events?

3. What is the moral of your story? Is there more than one? Write one clear sentence for each moral below.

GLOOSKAP DEFEATS HIS BROTHER MALSUM THE WOLF

A Micmac story told by Charles Leland, in *Algonquin Legends of New England*.

Now the great lord Glooskap, who was worshipped long ago by all the Wabanaki, was a twin with a brother. As Glooskap was good, this brother, whose name was Malsumsis, or Wolf the younger, was bad. Before they were born, the babes consulted to consider how they had best enter the world. And Glooskap said, "I will be born as others are." But the evil Malsumsis thought himself too great to be born that way, and declared that he would burst through his mother's side. And as they planned it so it came to pass. Glooskap came first, quietly, while Malsumsis kept his word, killing his mother.

The two grew up together, and one day Malsumsis, who knew that they both had charmed lives, asked Glooskap what would kill him. Now each had his own secret as to this, and Glooskap, remembering how Malsumsis had slain their mother, thought it would be unwise to trust his life to one so fond of death, though it might prove to be well to know how Malsumsis could be killed. So they agreed to exchange secrets, and Glooskap, to test his brother, told him that the only way in which he himself could be slain was by the stroke of an owl's feather, though this was not true. And Malsumsis said, "I can die by a blow from a fern-root."

It came to pass that Malsumsis was tempted to kill Glooskap, for in those days all men were wicked. So, taking his bow, he shot Ko-ko-khas the owl, and with one of his feathers he struck Glooskap while sleeping. Then Glooskap awoke in anger, yet craftily said that it was not by an owl's feather, but by a blow from a pine-root, that his life would end.

Then the false Malsumsis led his brother another day far into the forest to hunt, and, while Glooskap again slept, hit him on the head with a pine-root. But Glooskap arose unharmed, drove Malsumsis away into the woods, sat down by the brook-side, and thinking over all that had happened, said, "Nothing but a flowering rush can kill me." But the Beaver, who was hidden among the reeds, heard this, and hastening to Malsumsis told him the secret of his brother's life. For this Malsumsis promised to bestow on Beaver whatever he should ask; but when Beaver wished for wings like a pigeon, the warrior laughed, and scornfully said, "Get away from me. You with a tail like a file, what need do you have of wings?"

Then the Beaver was angry, and went forth to the camp of Glooskap, to whom he told what he had done. Therefore Glooskap arose in sorrow and in anger, took a fern-root, sought Malsumsis in the deep, dark forest, and smote him so that he fell down dead. And Glooskap sang a song over him and lamented.

GLUSKAP TEMPERS THE WIND

As printed in "Penobscot Tales and Religious Beliefs," by Frank Speck, *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 48, 1934.
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Then Gluskabe overturned a rocky point and made his canoe of it. Then he went duck hunting in his hollow stone canoe. He could not kill any birds as the wind blew so hard that he could hardly paddle about. At last he suddenly grew angry, thinking, "What causes such continuous winds?"

Then Gluskabe said, "Grandma, I am going to search for where the wind comes from."

"It is very far," said his grandmother.

"No matter how far away it is," said he, "I am going to find out who causes it. Soon I will return." He went away going against the wind, it growing stronger as he went. On the seventh day he could hardly walk, it was so strong. It blew off all his hair. Then he saw a great magic bird slowly waving its wings, making the wind. When he reached the place with difficulty, he said, "Grandfather, couldn't you possibly make stronger wind?"

"Grandchild, that's the best I can do," said the big bird. Then Gluskabe said, "If you could possibly sit higher up, far over there on the hill on the peak you would make it stronger."

"No, grandson, I could not," said he, "I have always sat here since the beginning."

"I will help you, grandfather," said Gluskabe.

"Very well," said the bird, "if you will help me I will go because I want all who face me to have the benefit of my wind." Then Gluskabe took the big bird on his back and carried him to a high ledge and there dropped him accidentally so he suddenly broke his wing. Then Gluskabe left, and went home.

"Now," said he, "I shall have good duck hunting. We shall always have a calm." Then he went out paddling. Surely it was calm. The water grew so thick with scum that he could hardly paddle. Said he, "I think I will go again there where the wind is. It is always too calm."

He went to where the great bird was. The bird did not know him now when he arrived because Gluskabe's hair had already grown out again. "What has caused so much calm always, grandfather?" asked Gluskabe of the big bird.

"Simply that an ugly bald-headed man came here and wanted stronger wind. And I told him that I could not manage it, it was all I could do and he told me he would carry me to a higher place. Sure enough, he carried me, and he dropped me and broke my wing. Now I have only one wing."

Then said Gluskabe, "Grandfather, I will carry you back again where you sat, and will also heal you."

"Oh, grandchild," said the bird, "I would rejoice so much if you would. I am already tired of lying here." Then Gluskabe carried him and put him back where he wanted to sit and healed his wing.

"Now, grandfather, try your wing." And the bird tried his wing and it was cured. Gluskabe was blown over. The bird was very glad.

"You have pleased me very much, grandchild."

"Now, grandfather," said Gluskabe, "don't hereafter use your wings too steadily, because our descendants can't hunt for their living when there are such continuous winds."

When you move your wings our descendants can not paddle nor hunt ducks on the water. Now if possible wave your wings for a day or two, then rest a day so that our descendants can hunt ducks on the ocean."

"You speak the truth, I guess, grandson. There was too much wind. From now on there will not be such violent wind." Then Gluskabe went home, and when he arrived his grandmother rejoiced.

GLUSKABE'S CHILDHOOD AND GLUSKABE RELEASES THE GAME ANIMALS

Gathered by Frank Speck, printed in "Penobscot Tales and Religious Beliefs,"

Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 48, 1934.

Here starts my story of Gluskabe. He lived with his grandmother Woodchuck. She raised him and taught him everything; how to hunt, fish, and how to make a living. When he grew large enough to use a bow, he said to his grandmother, "Make me a bow and arrows, I want to hunt deer, I am already tired of rabbit's meat and fish." Then he roamed away and killed a deer and she was glad. She was very proud of him. The next day he roamed and killed a bear. "What creature is it?" he asked her when he brought it home. She was glad and began to dance. "You've killed a bear, a great piece of meat. Now we shall have plenty of fat. We shall live richly," said she and of her grandson, "He will be a great shaman. He will do great wonders for our descendants as he goes on," she thought to herself, "because various things will endanger our lives. Some animals will try to kill us. Some rivers will try to drown us. Change them so they will not be dangerous." Then Gluskabe said to his grandmother, "I would like you to show me how to build a canoe so that I can hunt ducks." "Surely I will teach you, grandson!" So she taught him how to build a canoe, and at last it was finished. She was glad when he paddled out to get ducks. He got a great many.

Then he lay down on his bed and began to sing, wishing for a magic game-bag so that he could get the animals easier. His grandmother Woodchuck then made him a game-bag of deer hair. When it was finished, she tossed it to Gluskabe but he did not stop singing. Then again she made one of moose hair and tossed it to him, but he did not stop. Then, pulling Woodchuck hairs from her belly, she made one of those. Gluskabe was glad, and he thanked her. Then he went into the woods and called all the animals. He said to them, "Come on, you animals, the world is coming to an end, and you animals will all die." Then animals of all kinds came, and he told them, "Get inside my bag, here. In there you will not see the world come to an end." Then they entered the bag, and he carried it to the wigwam. "Now, grandmother," said he, "I have brought game animals. From now on we will not have such a hard time searching for game." Then Woodchuck went and saw all the different kinds of animals which were in the bag. She went into the wigwam and said, "You have not done well, grandson. In the future our descendants will die of starvation. I have placed great hopes in you for our descendants. Do not do what you have done. You must only do what will benefit them, our descendants." Gluskabe heeded his grandmother. He went and opened the bag and told the animals, "Go out. The danger has already gone by. Go out!" And they scattered.

GLUSKAP MAKES MAN AND THE ANIMALS.
A Passamaquoddy legend collected by Charles Leland in
Algonquin Legends of New England.

Glooskap came first of all into this country, into Nova Scotia, Maine, Canada, into the land of the Wabanaki, next to sunrise. There were no Indians here then.

In this way he made the first man: he took his bow and arrows and shot at trees, the basket-trees, the Ash. Then Indians came out of the bark of the Ash tree.

Glooskap made all the animals. He made them at first very large. Then he said to Moose, the great Moose who was as tall as Ketawkqu's, the giant as tall as the pines, "What would you do should you see an Indian coming?"

Moose replied, "I would tear down the trees on him." Then Glooskap saw that the Moose was too strong, and made him smaller, so that Indians could kill him.

Then he said to the Squirrel, who was of the size of a Wolf, "What would you do if you should meet an Indian?"

And the Squirrel answered, "I would scratch down trees on him."

Then Glooskap said, "You also are too strong," and he made him little.

Then he asked the great White Bear what he would do if he met an Indian; and the Bear said, "Eat him." And the Master bade him go and live among rocks and ice, where he would see no Indians.

So he questioned all the beasts, changing their size according to their answers. He took the Loon for his dog; but the Loon absented himself so much that he chose for this service two wolves--one black and one white. But the Loons are always his tale-bearers.

GLUSKAP IS DEFEATED BY THE MIGHTY WASIS

A Penobscot story collected by Charles Leland in *Algonquin Legends of New England*.

Now it came to pass when Glooskap had conquered all his enemies, even the Kewahqu', who were giants and sorcerers, and the motewolon, who were magicians, and the Pamola, who is the evil spirit of the night air, and all manner of ghosts, witches, devils, cannibals, and goblins, that he thought upon what he had done, and wondered if his work was at an end.

And he said this to a certain woman. But she replied, "Not so fast, Master, for there yet remains One whom no one has ever conquered or got the better of in any way, and who will remain unconquered to the end of time."

"And who is he?" inquired the Master.

"It is the mighty Wasis," she replied, "and there he sits; and I warn you that if you meddle with him, you will be in sore trouble."

Now Wasis was the Baby. And he sat on the floor sucking a piece of maple-sugar, greatly contented, troubling no one.

As the Lord of men and beasts had never married or had a child, he knew nothing of the way of managing children. Therefore he was quite certain, as is common with such people, that he knew all about it. So he turned to Baby with a bewitching smile and bade him come to him.

Then Baby smiled again, but did not budge. And the Master spake sweetly and made his voice like that of the summer bird, but it was of no avail, for Wasis sat still and sucked his maple-sugar.

Then the Master frowned and spoke terribly, and ordered Wasis to come crawling to him immediately. And Baby burst out into crying and yelling, but did not move for all that.

Then, since he could do but one thing more, the Master had recourse to magic. He used his most awful spells, and sang the songs which raise the dead and scare the devils. And Wasis sat and looked on admiringly, and seemed to find it very interesting, but all the same he never moved an inch.

So Glooskap gave it up in despair, and Wasis, sitting on the floor in the sunshine, went goo! goo! and crowed.

And to this day when you see a baby well contented, going goo! goo! and crowing, and no one can tell why, know that it is because he remembers the time when he overcame the Master who had conquered all the world. For of all the beings that have ever been since the beginning, Baby is alone the only invincible one.