

Creation Stories

- A creation story is a mythic-religious explanation that describes the beginnings of earth, humanity, life and the universe. Despite the diversity of these stories, many themes recur.

Themes:

1. Perhaps the most obvious is **reference to the dominant physical elements of the environment** in which the tellers lived.
 - a. The *Maori* story largely explains storms and the sea, and it devotes considerable attention to fish, whereas in the *Jicarilla Apache* story fish are created only incidentally, and the creation itself doesn't mention oceans or lakes.
2. Another recurrent theme is **the superiority of the storyteller's people**. Strikingly, but not surprisingly, no culture has an origin story that justifies the superiority of another people, or even the equality of all people.
 - a. The *Potawatomi* tell how white-skinned and black-skinned people were created with flaws and impurities before the more successful creation of people with red skins.
 - b. The *Hebrews* tell how one of their ancestors negotiated a special relationship with the only true god.
3. Many of the stories either **omit the role of women or condemn women**.
 - a. In the Hebrew story, Eve gets humanity expelled from Eden, and no other female is mentioned for generations thereafter.
 - b. Young girls are likewise responsible for disaster in the Apache story.
4. Many of the stories **justify the human exploitation of nature**.
 - a. The *Jicarilla Apache* story tells how the Hactcin told the Jicarilla that plants and hooved animals would be their food, and that they could roam across the world as their home.
5. Many of these stories **begin in darkness, and the generation of light is part of the creation itself**.
6. The tremendous **diversity of these stories** in their materials, characters, and themes suggests they **developed independently**, rather than being derived from one primeval story told by the first human storytellers.
7. Despite their diversity, the great commonality of all these stories is a **desire to explain the world and its history**. Humans today have the same desire, and they satisfy it with microscopes and telescopes, with satellites and seismographs, and with analysis of DNA. Explanations developed millennia ago could not draw on such sophisticated technologies and so seem quaint today.