

Use with PLT activity “Sounds Around”

Discussion questions:

- What sound in nature inspired the creation of this myth?
- What is special about the pots?
- What is the meaning behind the cawing of the crows?
- What did the thunder-like noise signify?

Guide the students in making up their own myths to explain why things in nature sound the way they do. Have them begin with a particular sound. For example, why do trees groan, leaves rustle, the wind howl, or eagles chatter? Then develop a story about that sound.

The Magic Pots – *Ojibwe*

A long time ago, a very old woman lived in an Ojibwe village. Besides the wigwam she lived in, she also had a separate bark house where she kept five beautiful pots on a shelf. Those pots were magical and weren't supposed to be used for cooking or anything. Instead, the old woman kept them there so the other women of the village could come look at them and get ideas and go home and make their own pots to use. No one could make pottery without the inspiration of the magic pots and, to keep them safe, no one but the old woman was allowed to touch the pots.

One year, everyone went out at the same time to pick berries, and the old woman went along too. In the village, five little girls were left behind to tend to their chores. They quickly gathered firewood and did all of their other chores and then got together to play. Out of curiosity, the girls went to the old woman's bark house where she kept the magic pots, so they could get a look at how beautiful they were. But that wasn't enough for them, and they got the pots down off their shelf and took them outside and played with them, despite the fact that the old woman had forbidden anyone to touch the pots.

As the girls were playing, a wolf appeared. The girls were frightened and got up to run into one of the houses to get away from the wolf. As they ran, one of them fell over the birchbark sheet they used to cover the ground under the pots, and instantly there was a noise like thunder. When the wolf was gone, the girls came out and found that all of the pots had been shattered into tiny pieces.

When the old woman returned and found out what had happened, she found the five girls and told them what they had done. As soon as she told them, a magic thing happened, and the disobedient girls were changed into five black crows and flew away, cawing.

Without the magic pots, the women no longer knew how to make pottery, and that is why the Ojibwe no longer make pots. But the crows live on and in summer you can see them in some tall tree, uttering a mournful caw, caw.

Adapted from Albert B. Reagan, 1928, “The Magic Pots,” *Wisconsin Archaeologist* 7[1]227-28.

<http://www.mpm.edu/content/wirp/ICW-141.html>