Lesson 2

Native American folklore

Task 1

Read the text

American Literature has roots in Indian culture. Indian culture was represented by orally transmitted myths, legends, epics, tales and songs, that were used to explain natural phenomena that they didn't understand. Native Americans' literary sources were pagan. Indian tribes worshiped animals, plants. The Indian contribution to America is greater than is often believed. Hundreds of Indian words in everyday American English include “canoe,” “tobacco,” “potato,” “moccasin,” “moose,” “persimmon,” “raccoon,” “tomahawk,” and “totem.”
The most common Indian myths are the creation myths, that tell a story to explain how the earth was formed. Others include explanations about the sun, moon, constellations, animals, seasons, and weather. That was one of the ways for many tribes to keep their cultures alive; it was not just a collection of stories, but of their beliefs, their ways, and their lives. There are many different kinds of stories. There are some that are called "hero stories"; these are stories of people who lived at one time, and who were immortalized by these stories of them. There are "trickster stories", about the different trickster figures of the tribes (Saynday for the Kiowa; Coyote for the Navajo; and so on), who were both helpful and dangerous figures in the beliefs. There are tales that are simply warnings; they warn against doing something that may harm in some way. Many of these tales have morals or some form of belief that is being taught. This is how the things were remembered.

Here are the lines from the book written by an American school teacher.

‘The study of Native American people and their cultures is a challenge because of the stereotypes that exist, not only in the literature, but in our own minds and in those of the children we teach. Not long ago I was working with children in a school on the east coast and told them I had just come from working with Indian children in North Dakota. They were sure I was telling another story since, they said, "There aren't any more Indians. We killed them all." Hard to believe such things in today's world of television and worldwide communication, but I'm sure

these children were not unique in their ignorance. Many studies of Indians leave students convinced that all Indians lived in tepees then and still do or that they were all wiped out, not that our ancestors didn't try.'

Pick the Right Answer!

1
What kind of stories did Native Americans use to explain natural phenomena?
a
Myths and legends
b
Epics and tales
c
Songs and poems
d
All of the above
2
What is the Indian contribution to American English?
a
Hundreds of everyday words
b
Only a few words
c
No words at all
d
Only words related to animals
3
What are creation myths?
a
Stories that explain how the earth was formed
b
Stories about the sun, moon, and stars
c
Stories about animals and plants
d
Stories about the seasons and weather
4
What are hero stories?
a
Stories about people who were immortalized
b
Stories about helpful and dangerous figures
c
Stories that warn against doing something harmful
d
Stories that have morals or beliefs being taught
5
Why is the study of Native American people and their cultures a challenge?
a
Because of the stereotypes that exist
b
Because of the lack of literature
c
Because of the lack of communication
d
Because of the lack of interest
6
What did the children in the school on the east coast believe about Indians?
a
There aren't any more Indians
b
Indians still live in tepees

c
Indians were wiped out
d
All of the above

7
What is the author's opinion about the stereotypes of Native Americans?
a
They are accurate
b
They are harmless
c
They are challenging
d
They are beneficial

Task 2

Can You Tell which Sentences are True and which are False?

1 Native American folklore was not orally transmitted.

2 Indian tribes worshiped only human beings.

3 The Indian contribution to America is not significant.

4 There are no Indian words in everyday American English.

5 Creation myths are the only type of myth in Native American folklore.

6 Trickster stories are about helpful figures in the beliefs.

7 Tales in Native American folklore do not have any moral lessons.

8 Stereotypes about Native American people do not exist in literature.

9 All Indians lived in tepees.

10 All Indians were wiped out by the ancestors of Americans.

Homework : Study the materials related to the topic.