

Wild Wendigos

The Algonquian-speaking First Nations in North America have a scary legend. It is the story of the wendigo. Wendigos are monsters. They kill and eat their human victims.

There are many different stories about wendigos. But in most of the stories, wendigos actually started out as humans themselves. They transform into monsters because they are greedy.

Wendigos eat humans who are alone. They can also infect humans who are selfish. They turn the selfish humans into wendigos too. Creepy!

Wendigos look different depending on the legend. Some stories describe them as thin like skeletons. Others say they are giants who grow bigger as they eat. In some tales they have animal ears with either antlers or horns. They almost always have sharp teeth and bad breath.

Why do stories about wendigos exist? People who study Algonquin-speaking cultures say that they are a cautionary tale. A cautionary tale is a warning. The legends of the wendigos are warning people not to be greedy and selfish. The stories are also warning people not to be alone.

These warnings make sense. Traditionally, First Nations cultures were community oriented. In order to survive in the wilderness, it was important for



people to share with each other. Being alone was risky. And being selfish and greedy did not help the group.

Horror stories like the legends of the wendigo encouraged people to work together. Today, understanding the stories can help us to understand the culture they came from. It can also give us a good scare!



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Wendigos are _____.
 - a. Monsters
 - b. Former humans
 - c. Legendary creatures
 - d. All of the above

2. What do wendigos almost always have?
 - a. Animal ears and antlers
 - b. Sharp teeth and bad breath
 - c. A body like a skeleton
 - d. A body that grows as it eats

3. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a characteristic of someone who either becomes a wendigo or is eaten by one?
 - a. Selfish
 - b. Greedy
 - c. Curious
 - d. Alone

4. What does it mean to be community oriented?
 - a. To work together as a group
 - b. To be independent
 - c. To ignore other people
 - d. To be kind to animals

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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