



Embark on a Journey to Turtle Island!

Step inside the time machine and travel back to a time when the Earth was just beginning to take shape. Through storytelling, students discover that many Native Americans refer to North America as "Turtle Island," a special name that symbolizes the deep connection between people, animals, plants, and the Earth. Native Americans continue to live here today, taking care of Turtle Island as they would family. This lesson sparks creativity and cultural awareness as students reflect on the importance of respecting nature and traditions, capturing their experiences with postcards that celebrate this ancient Wonder of the World.



HANDS-ON STEM EDUCATION

For over 30 years, PCS Edventures has inspired students to develop a passion for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), focusing our efforts on making learning and discovery a fun and interactive process for grades K-12.

- Afterschool
- Expanded Learning
- Summer Programs
- Classrooms

Embark on a Journey to Turtle Island



SCHEDULE

- Introduction (10 min.)
- Turtle Island (30 min.)
- Bringing Turtle Island to Life (10 min.)
- Wrap Up (10 min.)



MATERIALS

Introduction

- Open space

Turtle Island

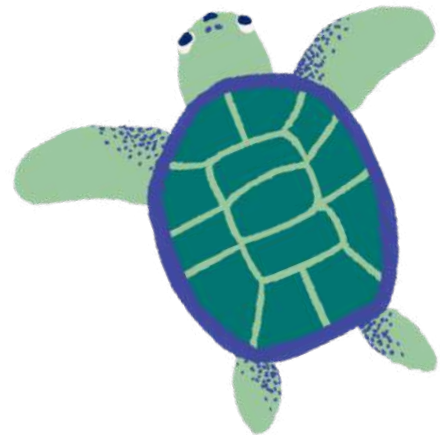
- Tree template (1 per learner)
- Turtle Island template (1 per learner)
- Construction paper strips (3 per learner)
- Crayons or markers
- Glue
- Googly eyes (optional)
- Scissors
- Any other readily available materials
- Video: The First People of Turtle Island
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8M-J_Fn9Q –ForLOVEoftheARTS
- Video: Turtle Island Read Aloud
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbDk27MuFCc> –Jenny Doyle

Bringing Turtle Island to Life

- Open Space

Wrap Up

- Turtle Island Postcard (1 per learner)
- Crayons
- Markers
- Pencils





DAILY PREP

- Fold construction paper into equal sections hamburger style and cut into strips. Each student needs three strips of construction paper.
- Younger students may need assistance cutting out the trees.



OBJECTIVE

Learn about the significance of "Turtle Island" in Native American culture, explore the interconnectedness of nature and reflect on the importance of caring for the land.



STEAM CONNECTIONS

- **English Language Arts:** Speaking & Listening, Writing
- **Art:** Creating & Connecting

ALIGNED STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards (CCSS):

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1.A: Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4: Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.8: With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2: Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.5: Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

National Core Arts Standards (NCAS):

- VA:Cn10.1.2a: Create works of art about events in home, school, or community life.
- VA:Cr1.2.2a: Make art or design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.
- VA:Cr1.1.3a: Elaborate on an imaginative idea.
- VA:Cr2.3.3a: Individually or collaboratively construct representations, diagrams, or maps of places that are part of everyday life.
- VA:Cr3.1.3a: Elaborate visual information by adding details in an artwork to enhance emerging meaning.
- VA:Cn10.1.3a: Develop a work of art based on observations of surroundings.

21ST CENTURY SKILLS

- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction

HABITS OF MIND

- Creating, Imagining, Innovating
- Thinking Interdependently
- Gathering Data through All Senses
- Responding with Wonderment and Awe

KEY TERMS

Culture: the shared behaviors, customs and traditions of a group of people, including their food, language, sports, music and beliefs.

Native Americans: also called Indigenous or First Americans, these are the original peoples who inhabited the Americas and still live here today.

Origin Story: a traditional tale that explains how the world, people or certain aspects of nature came to be, often passed down orally. Also known as a creation story.

Time machine: a hypothetical device that permits travel into the past and future.

Time travel: the hypothetical ability to travel into the past or future.

Tradition: beliefs, routines and ways of celebrating in families or cultures.

Tribe: people who share the same culture, language and history. They often live in the same area and work together like a family.

Turtle Island: a name used by some Native American tribes for North America, based on its shape resembling a turtle and related origin stories.

Wonderful: something amazing or special.

Wonders of the World: impressive monuments or places that are considered to be of great importance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The first people to inhabit the Americas, known as Native Americans or First Americans, arrived thousands of years ago after making extraordinary journeys. For many years, it was believed they traveled on foot across the Bering Land Bridge, a land connection between Asia and North America during the last Ice Age, around 12,000 years ago. However, new evidence suggests that some people may have arrived much earlier by boat, following the coastline and harvesting kelp and other marine resources along what is now called the "kelp highway."

In California, the ancestors of the Yurok people have lived in the Redwood region for over 10,000 years, with their lineage stretching back 20,000 years. These early inhabitants developed a deep connection to the land, treating plants, animals, and waterways as part of their family—a view they continue to hold today.

Research and technology continue to shed new light on when and how humans arrived in the Americas. For example, recent discoveries in South America, such as 27,000-year-old sloth bones crafted into pendants by humans, provide evidence of early human presence much farther south than previously thought.

Many Native American peoples, particularly those from northeastern tribes like the Iroquois and Algonquian, call North America "Turtle Island." This name comes from their rich origin and creation stories, which describe the land as resting on the back of a giant turtle, symbolizing strength, balance, and interconnectedness. The name also reflects the shape of North America and Central America on a map, which resembles a turtle with a head, shell, and limbs extending across the continent.

Today, there are 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States, with California home to over 100 tribes—the largest number of any state. Across the Americas, thousands of Indigenous tribes have lived on Turtle Island since time immemorial, each with unique languages, traditions and ways of caring for the land. Tribes like the Yurok have long been guardians of Turtle Island, protecting its plants, animals and waterways as part of their deep respect for nature. Their stories and traditions teach us the importance of honoring the Earth and treating it like family.

Learning about other cultures helps us better understand each other and appreciate the wonders of the world, both locally and globally, and encourages us to honor and protect our shared home.



STEP-BY-STEP DIRECTIONS FOR INSTRUCTORS



INTRODUCTION

In this activity, learners time travel to a world where the Earth was entirely covered in water before any land existed. They'll imagine the wonders of the ocean and have fun pretending to be the creatures and plants they discover there.

Start by introducing the idea that, before there was land, the world was entirely covered with water. Ask the learners to imagine traveling back in time to when Earth had no land. Invite them to step inside an imaginary time machine, then have everyone turn in a circle and count down from 10.

A long, long time ago, before there was land, the world was completely covered in water. Let's pretend we're traveling back to that time! Step inside our imaginary time machine, spin around and count down with me from 10.

10, 9, 8, 7 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

When they reach "1," let them know they've splashed down into the ocean. Guide them to imagine the vast ocean and gently sway side to side, as if they're floating on the water and feeling the waves move around them.

Splash! We've landed in the ocean! Look around—there's no land anywhere, just water as far as you can see. Imagine the vast ocean all around us. Let's sway gently side to side, like we're floating on the waves.

After a few moments, encourage learners to think about what makes the ocean a wonder of the world. Ask them what's special about it and why it's important. Then, invite them to brainstorm animals and plants that might live in the ocean. Have learners act out the animals and plants they named—swimming like a fish or stretching their arms like kelp and seaweed.

Now, think about why the ocean is so special. What makes it an amazing wonder of the world? Why is it important? Let's brainstorm some animals and plants that might live here.

As we name them, let's become those animals and plants. Swim like a fish, stretch your arms like tall kelp or move like another ocean creature you've imagined!



TURTLE ISLAND

Students learn about the first people of North America and their deep connection to Turtle Island. After listening to a Native American origin story, they create a Turtle Island craft that honors Native American history and traditions, highlights the interconnectedness of nature and emphasizes the importance of caring for the Earth-like family.

Begin by introducing that the first people to live in North America are called Native Americans, or First Americans. They have lived on this land for thousands of years, and still live here today.

Let's learn about the first people to live in North America, the continent where we are. The United States is part of North America. These first people are called Native Americans, or First Americans, and they have lived here for thousands of years.

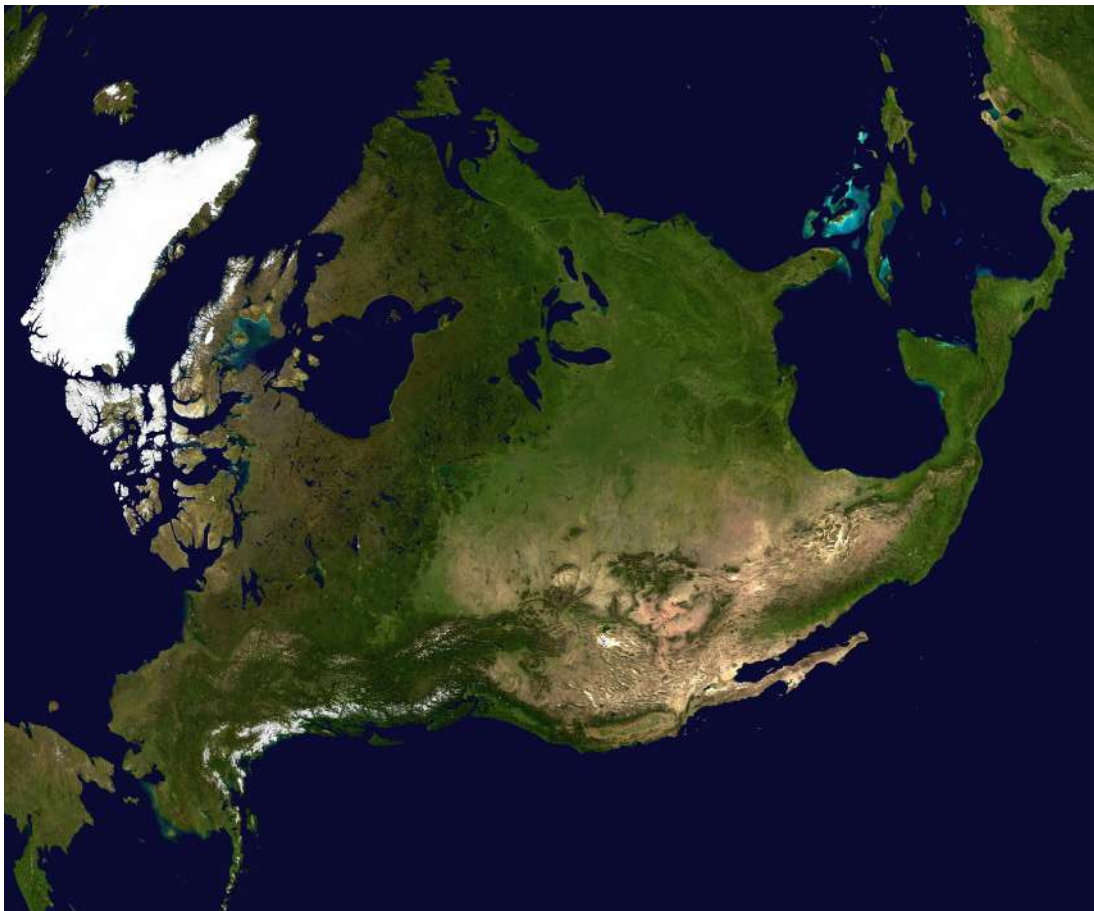
Show learners a map of North America and ask why some Native Americans call this land "Turtle Island." Explain that many Native American tribes refer to the land as "Turtle Island" because the shape of North America on a map looks like a turtle. This name is very special to them and honors the land where we all live.

Let's look at a map of North America. Some Native American tribes call this land "Turtle Island." Why do you think they call it Turtle Island?

Do you notice how its shape looks like a turtle? Many Native Americans call this land 'Turtle Island' for that reason. It's a very special name that honors the land where we all live.

Many Native Americans referred to this land as "Turtle Island" long before modern maps helped North America. This name comes from an origin story about the creation of the land. According to the story, the world began as water, and a turtle played a crucial role in forming the land where animals and people could live. The turtle's shell grew into the landscapes we see today.

But long before maps showed what North America looks like today, some Native Americans called this land "Turtle Island" for a different reason. This name comes from an origin story about how the land was created. In the story, the world began as water, and a turtle helped form the land so animals and people could live there. The turtle's shell grew and grew, forming the majestic mountains, vast deserts, flowing rivers and cascading waterfalls we see today—each full of wonder.



Play the video that tells the Turtle Island origin story, and afterward, invite learners to share their thoughts and what they found most wonderful in the story. **Please note, the muskrat in the story sacrifices its life, which may be upsetting for younger learners.**

Let's watch a video about the Turtle Island origin story. As you watch, think about what you find most wonderful in the story. Afterward, we'll talk about it together.

Video: **Turtle Island** Read Aloud—Jenny Doyle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbDk27MuFCc>

Emphasize that "Turtle Island" is more than a name—it symbolizes how everything on Earth is connected. Just as we care for our families, Native Americans have cared for Turtle Island for thousands of years.

"Turtle Island" is more than just a name. It shows how everything on Earth is connected—plants, animals, water, and people all depend on one another. Native Americans have cared for Turtle Island for thousands of years, respecting the land, rivers, trees and animals, treating them as family.



Highlight Native American traditions by explaining how Native Americans across Turtle Island wove baskets and mats using bark from trees and other plants. These items were practical but also deeply meaningful, representing the culture, traditions and stories of each tribe.

Many Native American tribes make strong and beautiful baskets and mats by weaving tree bark and plants. These baskets and mats aren't just useful—they also have special meanings.



source: wikimedia commons



Guide learners in creating their own Turtle Island craft. Demonstrate how to weave by going over and under, and explain how each strand can represent something important on Turtle Island, like plants, animals or water. When woven together, the strands create strength, just like the connections in nature.

Now, we'll create our own Turtle Island craft! I'll show you how to weave by going over and under with the strips of paper. Each strip can be something important on Turtle Island, like plants, animals or water, just like a loved family member.

Just like the turtle's shell gives it strength, each layer of weaving makes the baskets stronger. As we weave on our Turtle Island, we're adding strength and connecting everything together, creating a tight-knit family.

In this activity, learners create their own version of Turtle Island by weaving colorful patterns inside the turtle's shell, adding 3D trees to its back and drawing animals, insects, fish, plants and people that call Turtle Island and the surrounding ocean home.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Color the Turtle Island and the ocean.
2. Fold the turtle in half along the dotted line.
3. Cut along the dashed lines to separate the turtle's shell.
4. Weave strips of construction paper through the turtle's shell, alternating between going over and under with each row. Glue the ends of the strips to secure the weave in place.
5. Color and cut out the trees.
6. Fold the trees in half along the dotted lines.
7. Make a small cut along the dashed lines at the bottom of the tree to create tabs.
8. Glue tabs together.
9. Glue the trees to the turtle's back.
10. Add drawings of animals, insects, fish, plants, and people that live on Turtle Island and in the surrounding ocean.

While learners work on their Turtle Island creations, play a video that combines traditional and contemporary music with historical photos of Native Americans from across Turtle Island. Explain that the images show life long ago and that Native Americans today live just like us—wearing modern clothes, going to school, working, and enjoying similar activities. Highlight the importance of respecting Native cultures and their important role in today's world.

Video: **Turtle Island** Read Aloud—Jenny Doyle

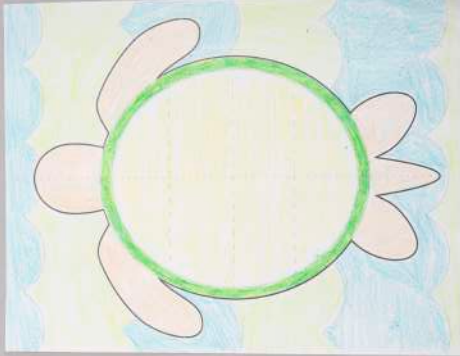
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8M-J Fn9Q>



TURTLE ISLAND

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

1



Color the Turtle Island and the ocean.

2



Fold the turtle in half along the dotted line.

3



Cut along the dashed lines to separate the turtle's shell.

4



Weave strips of construction paper through the turtle's shell, alternating between going over and under with each row. Trim them and glue the ends of the strips to secure the weave in place.

5



Color and cut out the trees.

6



Fold the trees in half along the dotted lines.

7



Make a small cut along the solid lines at the bottom of the tree to create tabs.

8



Glue tabs together.

9



Glue the trees to the turtle's back.

10



Add drawings of animals, insects, fish, plants, and people that live on Turtle Island and in the surrounding ocean.



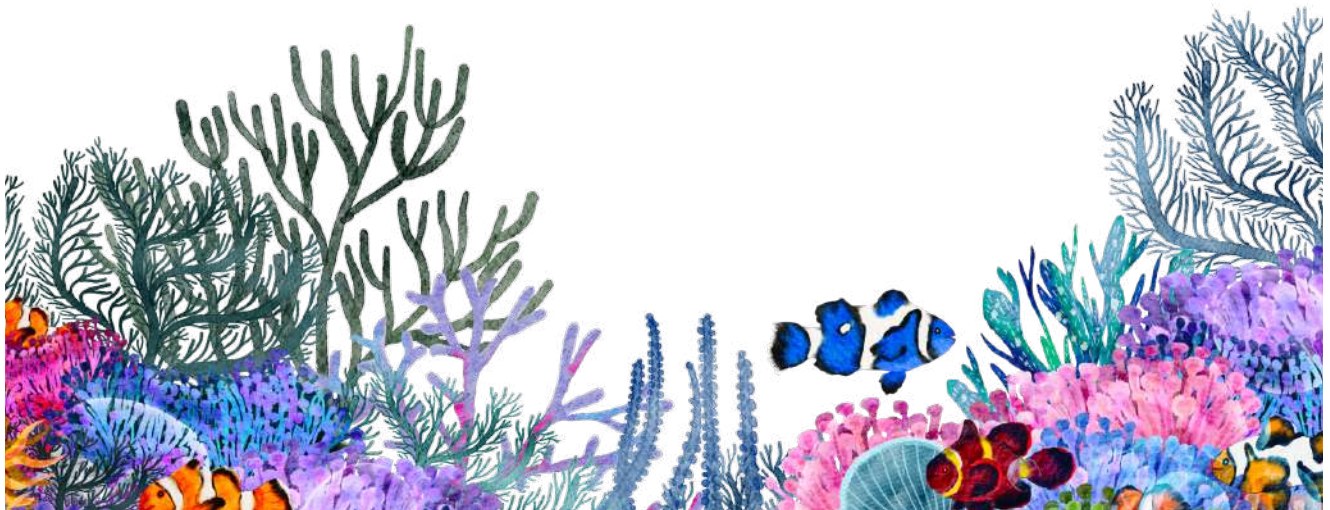
BRINGING TURTLE ISLAND TO LIFE

Bring Turtle Island to life as learners imagine and act out its wonders!

Begin by having learners brainstorm things found on Turtle Island, such as animals, plants, rivers and mountains. Designate a specific area as Turtle Island and then invite learners to become those elements through movement and acting, using their imagination to make Turtle Island come alive. While acting out their roles, guide them to reflect on why these elements are important and how they connect to the land, animals, people and Earth.

Let's use our imagination to bring Turtle Island to life! Brainstorm what is found on Turtle Island. What plants or animals do you think are here? What about different landscapes like mountains or deserts? Think about the weather, the sky and the water.

Once we have our ideas, we'll step on to Turtle Island and you'll get to become those things! You can stretch tall like a tree, flow like a river or roam like an animal. While you're pretending, think about why the things you've become are important and how they connect to the land, animals, people, and Earth.





WRAP UP

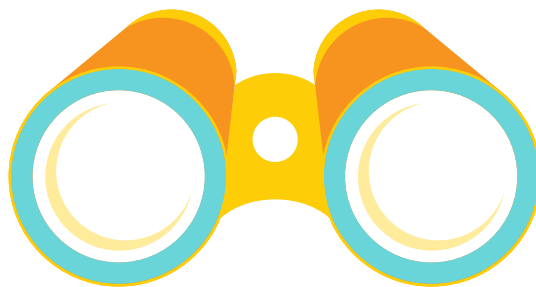
Guide travelers back to the present day by inviting them to step inside the fictional time machine. Pretend to dial in today's date and destination, then have everyone spin in the opposite direction while counting from 1 to 10.

To wrap up our exploration of the wonders of Turtle Island, let's journey back to the present day together. Travelers, let's step inside our time machine. Pretend to dial in the date and destination, setting our sights on returning to the here and now. Now, everyone spin in circles the opposite direction as before, and let's count together from 1 to 10.

Ready? Here we go: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10! Welcome back, learners! We've safely returned to the present day, filled with memories of our incredible journey through time and the wonders of Turtle Island.

Gather everyone in a circle and lead a discussion about the importance of caring for Turtle Island and everything that lives there. Ask learners to brainstorm and share ways they can help protect Turtle Island, such as respecting nature, conserving water or helping animals and people.

Why is it important to care for Turtle Island and everything that lives there? Can you think of ways we can help protect Turtle Island? What are some ways we can respect nature, save water, or help animals and people?





Individual

Have learners reflect on their adventures and capture their memories by creating a Turtle Island postcard. They can draw, write or color about what they saw, learned or found wonderful.

Now it's time to capture the fun on your World of Wonders Time Travel Postcard. Write about what you saw, learned and loved the most. Think about who you'd send it to and fill in as much information as possible.

Celebrate their reflections, and take time to admire everyone's postcards as a meaningful way to honor their connection to Turtle Island.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Why do some Native Americans call North America Turtle Island?
- Why is it important to take care of Turtle Island?
- How is Turtle Island like a big family?



EXTENSIONS

Native American Origin Stories

Share an origin story from a Native American tribe that is local to your area. Explain that stories are very important in Native American culture because they teach lessons and help explain the world.

Here are some great examples and resources of origin stories from different Native American tribes:

- Circle of Stories (PBS): <https://www.pbs.org/circleofstories/voices/index.html>
- Salinian & Cherokee: <https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/the-new-world/indian-creation-stories>
- Hopi: <https://youtu.be/D53yGnJwjT0?feature=shared>
- Clatsop-Nehalem Confederate Tribe: <https://youtu.be/wZZmFTnpehs?feature=shared>
- Nez Perce: <https://youtu.be/5x5PwxAKMHM?feature=shared>

I Am Native—Sharing Traditions

Begin by reading **I Am Native** by Violet Duncan, which offers a glimpse into the life of a multigenerational Native family and how traditions are passed down through the generations.

Video: **I am Native** Read Aloud—So'oh Story Time

<https://youtu.be/LeKC5Pu1D9M?feature=shared>

Have learners sit in a circle and reflect on how they are similar to the children in the book. Invite each learner to introduce themselves and share something positive using the prompt: "My name is _____. I am (a _____). I learned this from (who or where)." For multilingual learners, encourage them to introduce themselves in their native or secondary language and then repeat in English.

For example:

- "My name is Sarah. I am a baker. I learned this from my mom."
- "Mi nombre es Jake. Soy jardinero. Esto lo aprendí de mi vecino. My name is Jake. I am a gardener. I learned this from my neighbor."

Then, give learners time to write or draw more “I am” statements. Encourage them to reflect on their traditions, skills or favorite activities and who taught them or where they learned them. Remind them to include specific details to make their statements meaningful and personal.

Once they finish, invite learners to share their “I am” statements with the class. Emphasize that everyone has unique traditions, skills and experiences that make them special. Explain that sharing these helps connect people, just like the family in the book.

I am–Turtle Island Collage

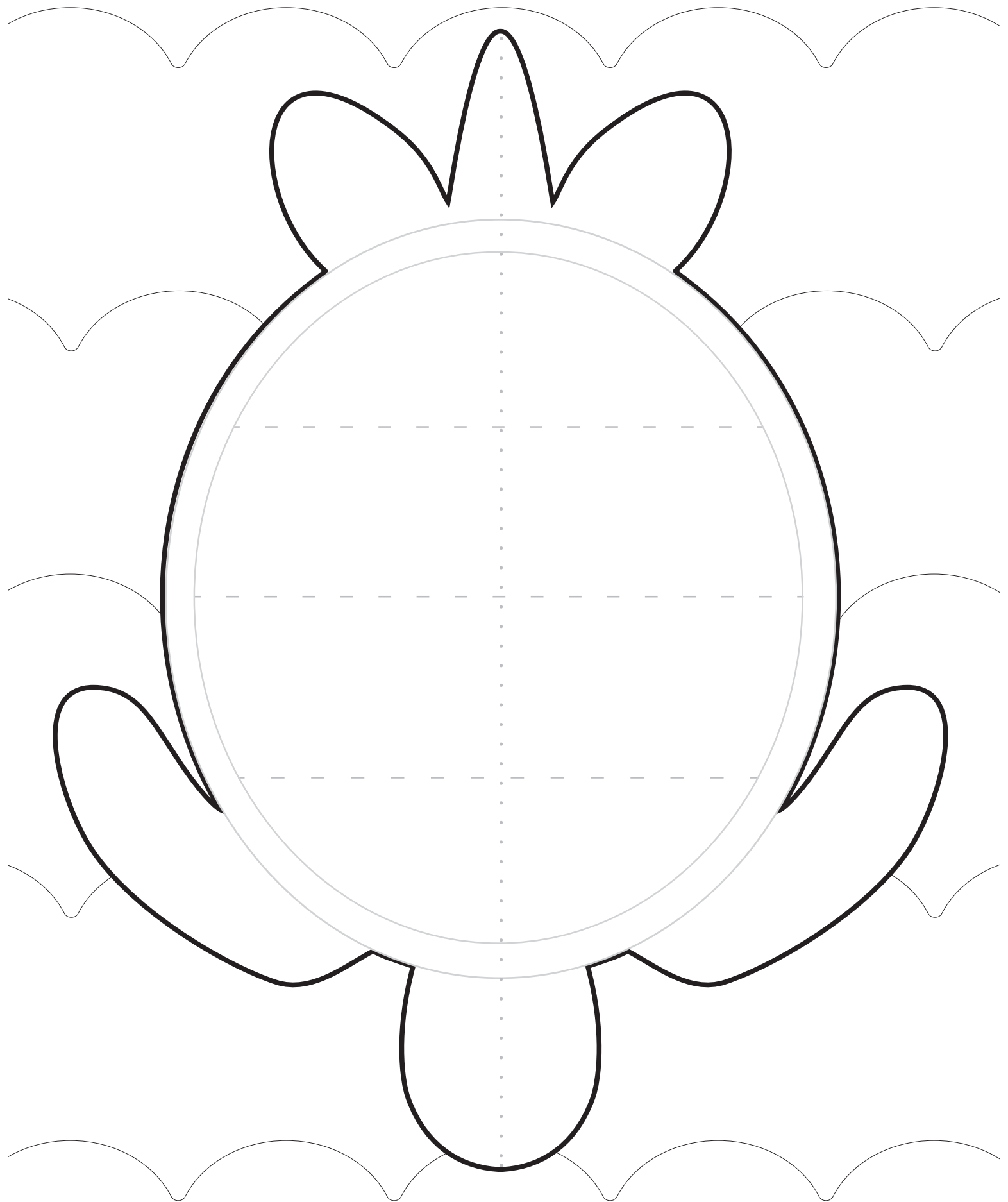
Create a large collage turtle as a class to honor Turtle Island and celebrate everyone’s unique connection to it and each other. Begin by writing “I am” at the top of the turtle. Learners can complete their “I am” statements by drawing or writing on geometric shapes that form a turtle’s shell. their own. Alternatively, use colorful Post-it Notes to build the shell with the statements. Add creativity by decorating the turtle’s body with drawings, designs or symbols that represent unity and diversity. To make the collage even more personal, include a photo of each learner on their section of the turtle’s shell. If there is extra time, have each learner complete a special message to another learner that reads, “You are wonderful because...”

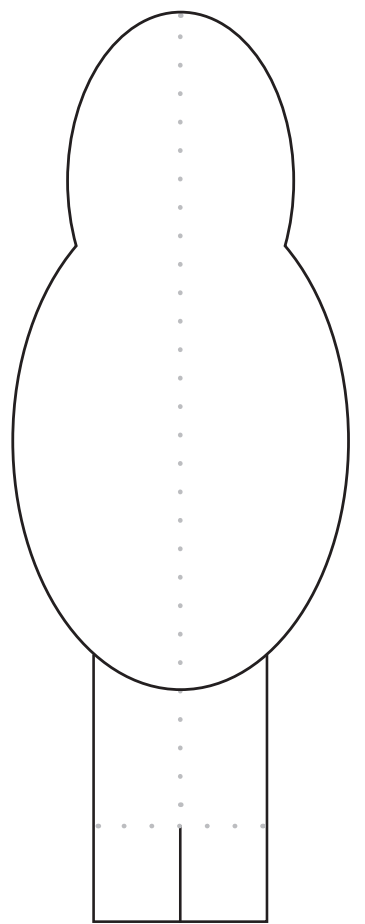
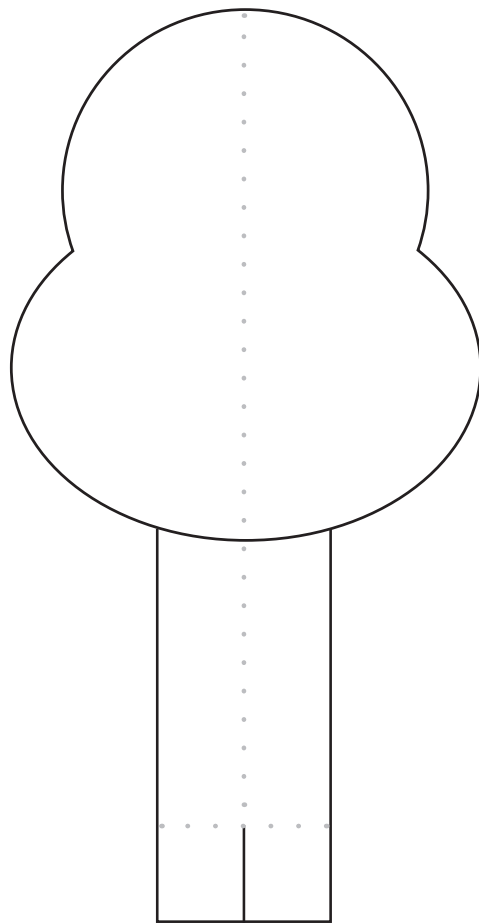
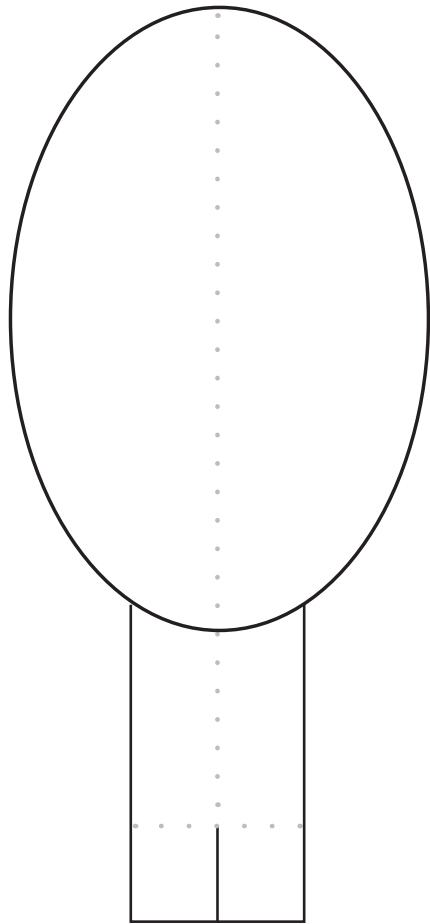
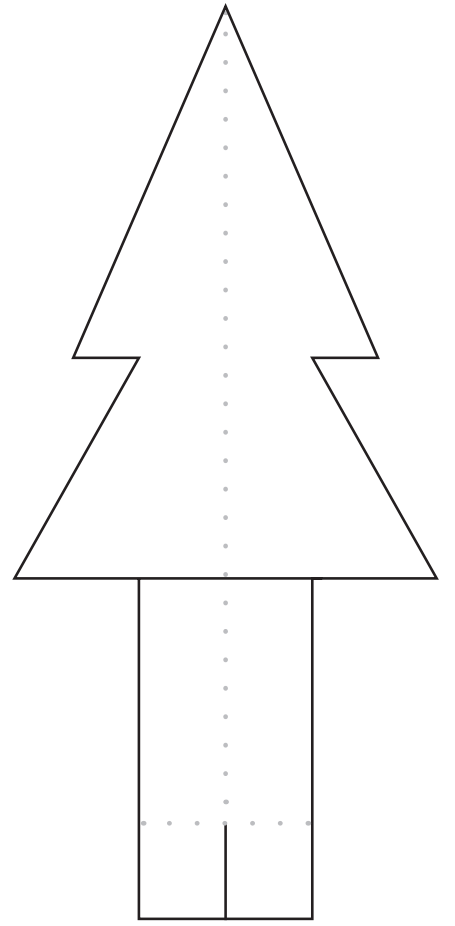
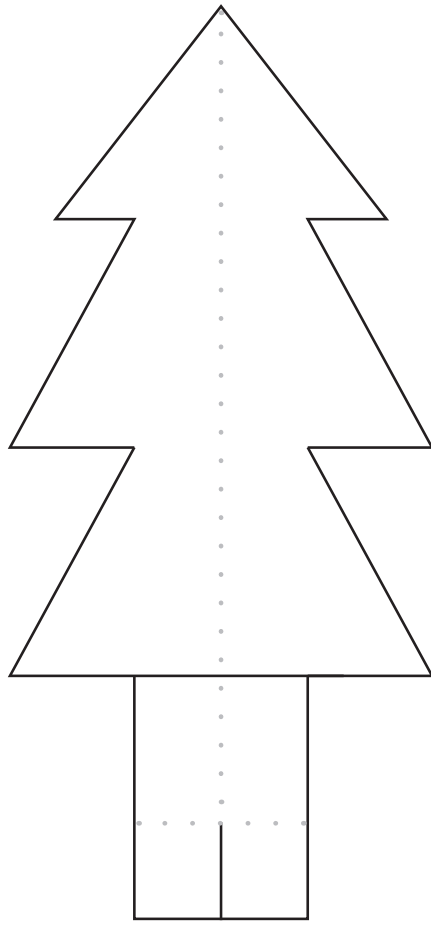
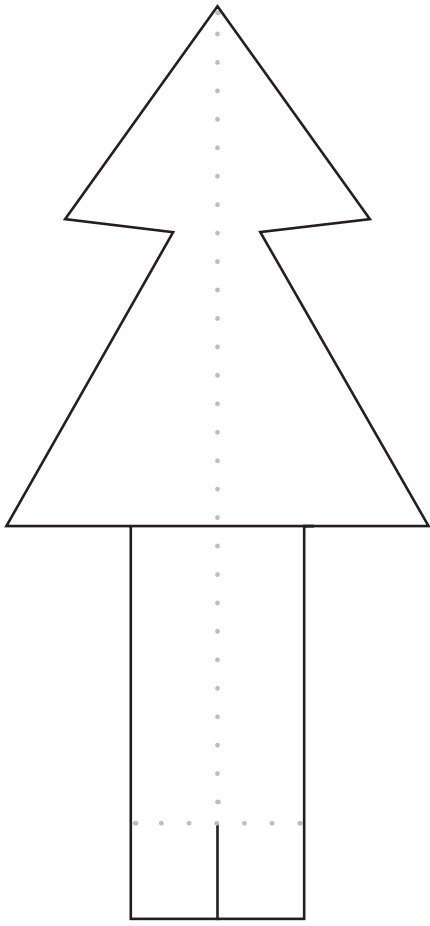
Turtle Island Web of Life

Have learners work together to form the shape of Turtle Island with a long piece of string. Some learners will stand on Turtle Island, while others stand outside to represent the ocean. Each learner thinks of something found on Turtle Island or in the ocean, such as a tree, animal or rock and wears a nametag with their element.

Learners take turns saying, “I am a _____. I need _____ to _____,” and pass the yarn to what they need. For example, “I am a tree. I need a woodpecker to eat the insects in my bark.” Once the string is passed, the next learner continues the connection by saying, “I am a woodpecker. I need rocks to rest on,” passing the string to the learner who represents rocks.

Continue until all learners have made at least one connection. Afterward, ask how it felt to be connected and discuss the importance of protecting each part of Turtle Island.





TURTLE ISLAND



TURTLE ISLAND



Turtle Island

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To:

From:

Turtle Island

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To:

From:

Featured Product



Grab your passports and binoculars and step into our time machine for an adventure like no other at World of Wonders camp! Explore ancient wonders like the Great Wall of China and Machu Picchu through **hands-on STEAM** activities that spark **creative thinking** and **collaborative learning**, while discovering your own wonder of the world. Tackle exciting **engineering** and **problem-solving** challenges with a **growth mindset**. Enjoy **imaginative** art projects and interactive experiences that enhance cultural **awareness, critical thinking, reflection** and **multi-subject integration**. Get ready for a camp filled with **positivity** and happiness as you explore what makes our world wonderful.



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