

## Place of Origin

### **Overview:**

Students become familiar with legends from cultures of the northern auroral zone and learn to identify places of origin on a world map.

### **Objectives:**

The student will:

- locate the Northern Hemisphere in relation to other geographic features on a world map, such as the equator, the Southern Hemisphere, and the Arctic Circle;
- identify some places of origin of aurora legends on a world map;
- learn why auroral legends are mostly associated with northern latitudes; and
- determine that aurora legends most often originate in the northern latitudes.

### **Materials:**

- Globe
- Sticky circles
- VISUAL AID: “Sounds”
- VISUAL AID: “Dancing Spirits”
- VISUAL AID: “Soccer”
- VISUAL AID: “Fire”
- VISUAL AID: “Battles”
- VISUAL AID: “Northern Hemisphere”
- STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: “Aurora Legends from Around the World”
- STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Northern Hemisphere”
- STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Place of Origin”



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### ***Activity Procedure:***

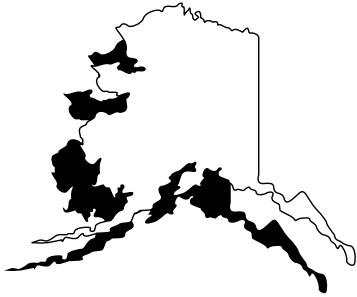
1. Hand out STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: “Aurora Legends from Around the World” and STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Northern Hemisphere.” Explain that this lesson focuses on the origin of certain aurora legends.
2. Use VISUAL AIDS: “Sounds,” “Dancing Spirits,” “Soccer,” “Fire,” and “Battles,” to discuss aurora legends.
3. After reading each legend, locate its place of origin on the VISUAL AID: “Northern Hemisphere.” Ask students to mark the places on the STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Northern Hemisphere.”
4. Help students identify the equator, Northern and Southern Hemispheres, and Arctic Circle on the globe and on the map on their worksheet. Point out the landmasses bordering the Arctic Ocean and explain that this area is known as the circumpolar north. Although the circumpolar north is a cold region of Earth, it is not the only cold region. Ask students to identify other cold regions (i.e. mountain ranges, Antarctica) on the maps on their STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Northern Hemisphere.” Show students where the circumpolar north, cold regions of Earth, the equator, Arctic Circle, and Northern and Southern Hemispheres are in relation to the place of origin of a variety of auroral legends.
5. Ask each student to identify the country of origin for their favorite legend from the STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: “Aurora Legends from Around the World,” then place a dot on the VISUAL AID: “Northern Hemisphere” and a sticky circle on the globe to show the place of origin for each student’s choice. Ask students to mark their STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Northern Hemisphere,” in the same way.
7. Lead a class discussion about why more aurora legends originate in countries in northern latitudes than in countries near Earth’s equator.
8. Hand out the STUDENT WORKSHEET: “Place of Origin” and ask students to respond to the questions listed.



### ***Answers to Student Worksheet:***

1. *(acceptable answers) Finland, Norway, Sweden, Greenland, Canada, Northern United States, Russia, and other countries in the circumpolar North*
2. *B) circumpolar north*

## Aurora Legends from Around the World



### *Alaska*

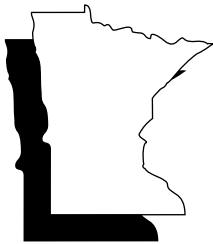
The Inupiat Eskimos of Barrow believe that the aurora is an evil thing. In the past, these people would carry knives to keep the northern lights away from them.

### *Lower Yukon River, Alaska*

The Yup'ik believed the northern lights were the dance of their favorite animals—deer, seals, salmon, and beluga whales.

### *South Dakota*

The Sioux culture believed the northern lights might be spirits of future generations waiting to be born. They also believed the aurora could provide religious guidance and spiritually heal a community. In 1805, the northern lights were believed to revive an important ceremony that had been abandoned years earlier.

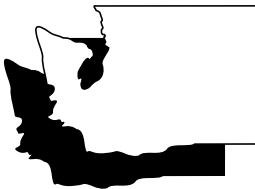


### *Minnesota*

The Menomini Indians of Minnesota saw the aurora as the light of torches used by friendly giants to help them spear their fish at night.

### *Wisconsin*

The Fox Indians in Wisconsin were scared of the northern lights. The northern lights were a bad omen. They believed they saw the ghosts of their enemies in the aurora.



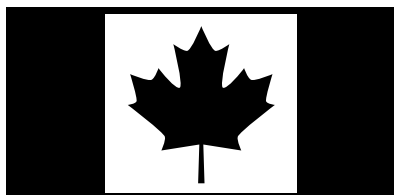
### *Washington*

The Makah Indians believe the auroras were fires lit by a powerful tribe of dwarves in the far north.

### *Manitoulin Island, Canada*

According to a legend recorded in 1850 by the Ottawas of Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron, the lights were a message from the creator-hero Nanahboozhoo, who restored the earth after the Flood and then went to live in the North. He told his people before he left that he would always watch over them. As a sign of his good will, he promised he would light large fires in the sky and they would appear to the people as the northern lights. Thus, the northern lights stand as a sign of harmony and trust between a people and their creator.

# Aurora Legends from Around the World



### *Canada*

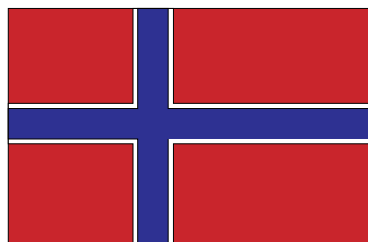
The Inuit of Canada believed the power of the northern lights could be used to cure disease. Knud Rasmussen, in 1920, found the aurora to be “in great demand as a helping spirit for the best shamans.” It was the responsibility of the Inuit healers to make “spirit journeys” into the northern lights to get advice about how to treat sickness and how to rescue spirits from death.

### *Sweden*

The Swedes saw people dancing the “polka.” The Swedes also believed that the northern lights were a sign of fruitfulness. A Swedish tradition has it that “when the northern light is burning, the seed will be abundant.”

### *Finland*

The Finns saw the northern lights as magical “fire foxes” that lit up the sky with sparks that flew from their glistening fire.

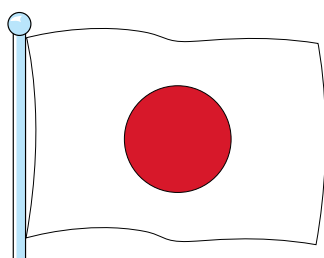


### *Norway*

In Norwegian folklore, the aurora is said to bring bad weather. It is also believed that a bright display of northern lights will bring snow and wind the next day.

### *Greenland*

The Eskimos believed the northern lights were the spirits of children who died at birth. They believed that one can see the children dancing happily in the northern lights.

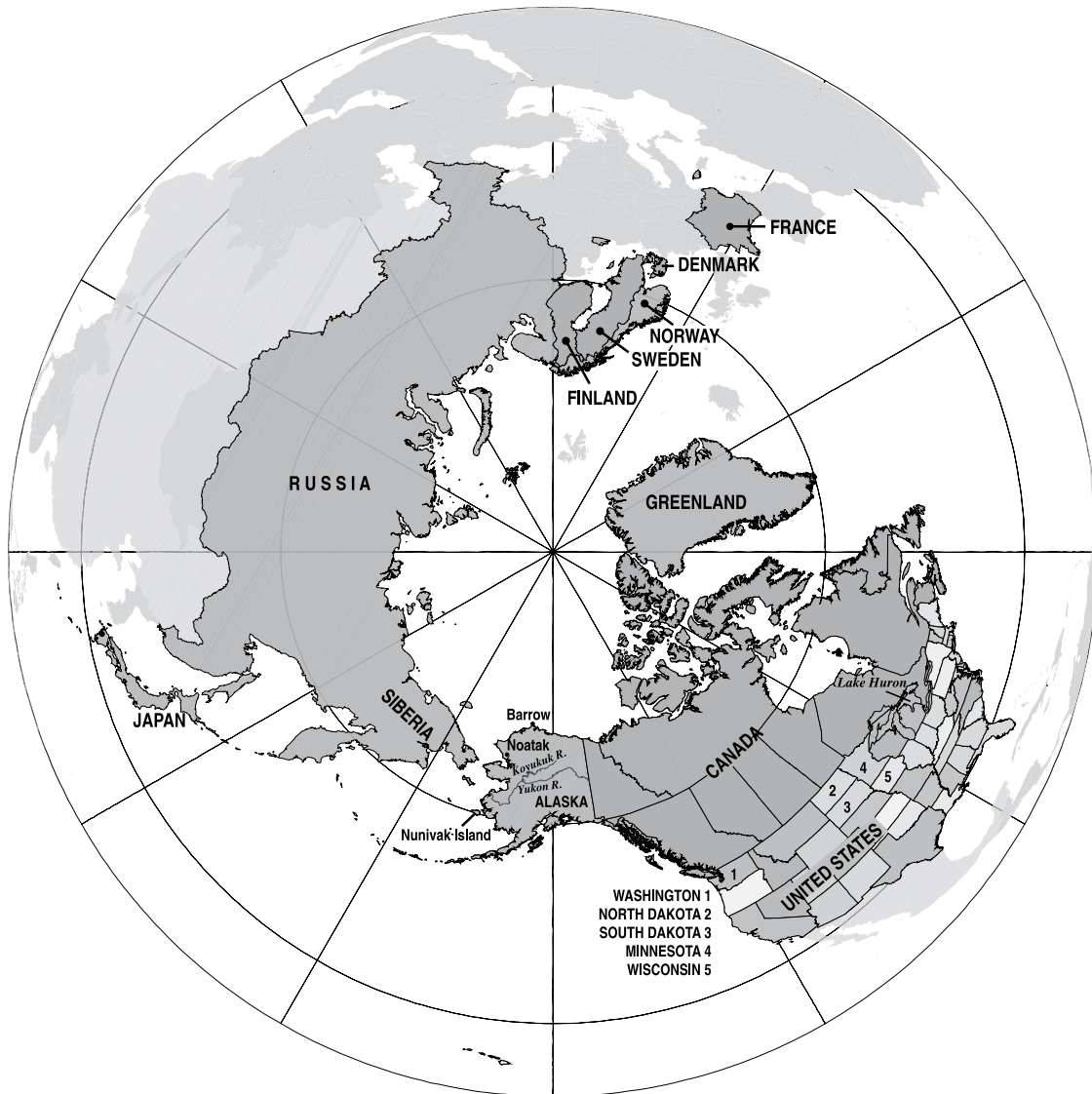


### *Japan*

The Japanese people believed the northern lights were connected with the ability for a woman to become pregnant. This legend probably originates in ancient China. In 2,600 B.C., a Chinese record reveals that “the mother of the Yellow Emperor saw a big lightning circulating around the Su star of Bei Don (in the Big Dipper) with the light shining all over the field and then became pregnant.” To this day, many Japanese honeymooners visit northern Canada each year to see the aurora. They believe that a child conceived in the spell of the lights will be very lucky.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Northern Hemisphere



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Place of Origin

1. Name two places (other than Alaska) where aurora legends are told.
  - A) \_\_\_\_\_
  - B) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Many aurora legends originate from this area:
  - A) all of Earth's cold regions
  - B) circumpolar north
  - C) equator
  - D) Southern Hemisphere



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