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The Fable

A common type of story found in the literature of most cultures around the world is the fable. A fable is a story in which animals or objects act like people in order to teach a lesson. When animals or objects share human characteristics, it is called personification. The lesson taught in a fable is called a moral.

There is a fable told within the story *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*. It is told by the Indian character named Jim, and it is about the salmon. Jim calls the salmon “the swimmer.” As he tells the fable, other events take place as well. For example, Mark, Jim, and Marta eat lunch.

The fable about the salmon goes like this: The swimmer passes the young of his own kind as they go out to sea. The young are afraid, but they want to swim down the river of life to the sea. The swimmer, who is now old, knows that it is time for him to return to the place of his birth. By the time the swimmer gets there, he is bruised and battered. He has had to make this difficult journey by swimming upstream against the strong current of the river and jumping over jagged rocks. A female who is swimming nearby has made the same arduous trip and is also close to death. She digs a seed bed and lays her eggs before she dies. The swimmer covers the eggs with milt, thus ending his life, which has been filled with courage and adventure. He has devoted his entire life to doing that which he was meant to do, and he dies triumphantly.

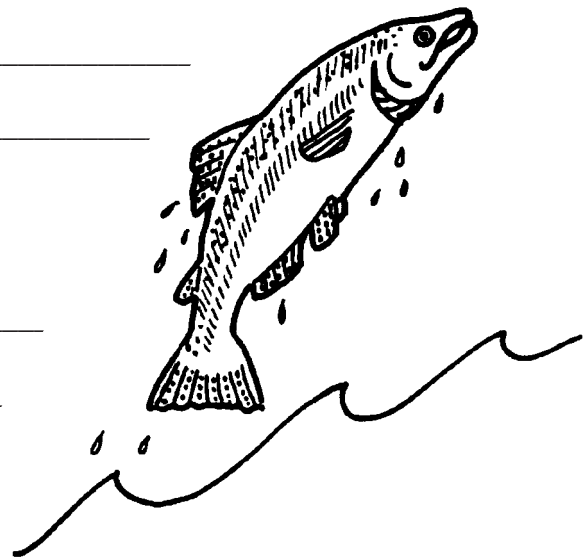
Activity

After studying the fable about the swimmer, answer the following questions.

1. How does the swimmer behave like a person in this story?

2. What lesson does this story teach?

3. What do you think this story meant to the Indians who told it?



Kingcome, British Columbia

I Heard the Owl Call My Name takes place in a village near Kingcome Inlet. This inlet is located in British Columbia, a beautiful Canadian Province in the far northwestern part of North America. Kingcome Inlet is one of the many bays along British Columbia's rocky coast. Not far from the shoreline, the land is covered with dense forest that is teeming with wildlife. Long ago several tribes of Indians made this area their home because of the abundant natural resources they found here.

The Indian tribes who lived near Kingcome Inlet did not need to know about agriculture since there were sources of food all around them. They survived by fishing, hunting, and gathering wild plants. The ocean and rivers provided an excellent place to find food. They were full of fish, seal, and whales. To tap this resource, the Indians built fishing boats, using trees from the forest. These remarkable boats, some of which measured over fifty feet in length and carried up to forty men, were made without using a single nail. They were so stable that the Indians were able to catch huge whales without capsizing.

In addition to fishing, the Indians got food by hunting and gathering. The forest was bursting with a variety of wildlife. There were large numbers of deer, bear, and caribou, as well as many smaller animals that were excellent sources of meat. Many wild plants could also be eaten. The Indians enjoyed berries, seeds, roots, and mushrooms.

These British Columbian Indians did not need to move from place to place searching for food. They found this area to be a desirable place to live. Not only did it have an ample supply of natural resources, but the nearby mountains provided a perfect means of protection from the raids of neighboring tribes. Consequently, they built the village of Kingcome near the mouth of the Kingcome River.

On the map below, locate the following and write the number for each from its location on the map. The first one is done for you.

- 1 British Columbia
- Kunaklini Glacier
- Alert Bay
- Queen Charlotte Strait
- Kingcome Inlet
- Sullivan Bay
- Silverthrone Mountain
- Vancouver Island
- Kingcome River
- Gilford Island

