trumpeter bird, stripping the flesh from them before man could rescue the bird. To this day the trumpet bird mourns because his legs are so thin.

Following after man, the other animals climbed down to the earth, sodden and cold. The toucan shivered so much that his long beak made music like a pair of castanets. Wise Owl shivered with cold for all his warm grey feathers. Mapuri the wild pig, who loves mud, found for once that there was too much mud for his pleasure and tried desperately to find a dry place.

While the animals were shivering with the cold, man began to make a fire. He found two sticks, rubbed them together until they grew hot, and so kindled a flame. Strangest of all was the fate that befell the alligator, a grumpy, quick-tempered animal, much disliked because he was so greedy. Alligator was proud of his long tongue, using it to sweep food into his mouth before any other animal could eat his fill. He went to pay his respects to man, hoping to get some food, for he was hungry. It was just after the marudi bird had swallowed the coal of fire, and man was angry because the labour of a morning had been lost and he must start all over again, rubbing two stick together until he kindled a flame.

When the animals saw Alligator coming, they shouted, “Perhaps he took the fire! Perhaps it was Alligator who stole your coal of fire, sweeping it into his mouth with his long tongue!” At these words man forced Alligator to open his mouth, and Alligator, in fear, swallowed half his tongue. To this day the alligator has a shorter tongue than any other animal.

These things happened because of Irraweka, mischief-maker. Up to this time all the animals had one language. They could speak to each other and to man. From this time of the great rains and the flood they grew fearful of each other, and each animal refused to speak to any other but his own kind. The birds chirruped and sang to each other, the baboon roared to his mate, the parrot screeched and laughed in his own language, the wild cow Abeyu lowed, the wild pig Mapuri grunted, the jaguar snarled, and the wise owl hooted as he flew through the dusk on flapping wings. Because Irraweka removed the basket from the fast-flowing spring at the root of the great tree, man and the animals no longer understood each other.

Activities

1. Many myths describe a time when humans lived in harmony with each other and with nature. As a class, discuss why you think this is the case. How is this sense of division expressed in our lives today?

2. With a partner, make a list of all of the natural phenomena which are explained in this myth. Research to find another myth that contains a similar explanation. Create a chart to compare the two myths.

3. Create a visual representation of this story, before and after the flood. Be prepared to offer an oral explanation of your interpretation.