

ABENAKI STORY CHARACTERS

There are many different stories in Abenaki culture about their history, their way of life, and their traditions. These stories are handed down from one generation to another and between family groups and tribes.

Although each storyteller crafts their own story, many of the stories feature the same figures, called "stock characters." Each stock character has their own personality traits. When listeners hear the name of a stock character, they have a pretty good idea of what to expect from this figure.

There are many stock characters in Abenaki stories, such as the ones listed below. The images are *not* Abenaki drawings. They are modern drawings that may help you remember the characters better.

Gluskabe is the central figure in many Abenaki legends. He is a folk hero who is kind and helpful. He teaches the Abenaki about their culture and about the Great Spirit, who is the source of all life. Gluskabe also has magical powers and can turn monsters into harmless animals.

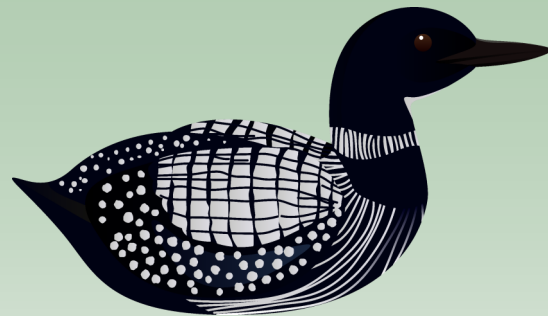
Mateguas is one of Gluskabe's brothers. He is often depicted as a rabbit. Mateguas loves to play tricks, but they are harmless tricks. He would not hurt anyone.

In many Abenaki stories, Mateguas has died and become king of the underworld, where all dead people go. As a spirit, Mateguas gives Gluskabe advice to help him guide the Abenaki.



Nokemes Agaskw is also known as Grandmother Woodchuck. She is Gluskabe's grandmother and a wise woman who gives advice to Gluskabe that he shares with the Abenaki.

Medawisla is Gluskabe's friend. He takes the shape of a loon and is sometimes called a "spirit bird." He often takes messages and news to Gluskabe. When loons call out, Abenaki legend says they are Medawisla reporting his news to Gluskabe.

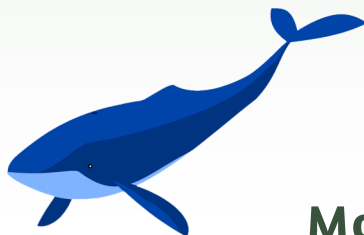


Miko is a squirrel who makes trouble in Abenaki stories.

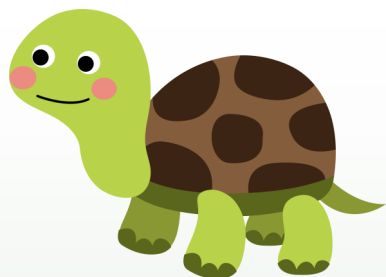


Azeban is a raccoon who likes to play tricks in Abenaki stories, but these tricks are funny, not mean.

Bootup is a whale who helps Gluskabe by carrying him over the ocean when he needs to travel long distances.



Moskwas is a muskrat who also helped Gluskabe create the world. He dove into the water to collect mud that Gluskabe shaped into land.



Tolba is a turtle who helped Gluskabe create the world by carrying the world on his back.



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Notice & Wonder

1. What do you notice about all the stock characters in Abenaki stories?
2. How does the fact that all these characters are based on animals the Abenaki could see in their everyday lives help the Abenaki connect to their traditions?
3. Do you have stories that help protect your traditions and guide your community? Share some of them with your class or research to find Abenaki stories that use these characters.