



CREATION STORY

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OBJECTIVE // To help students aged 5-12 years old learn about the Creation Story and how it calls us to be responsible stewards of Creation.

GROUP SIZE // 3-30 students

TIME // Total 60 minutes (30 min for part 1, plus 30 min for follow-up activity two weeks later.)

MATERIALS //

- Flipchart or whiteboard with markers
- 8.5x11 paper for each student
- Markers or pencil crayons - enough for students to use and share
- A small piece of paper for each student to write their ecological commitment
- Large envelope for the class to collect the commitments

PREPARATION //

- Review the Creation Story scripture passage (Genesis 1:1-2:4a and Genesis 2:4b-25, see Appendix), and the background information below.
- Review the resources on Stewardship of Creation: at devp.org/cst
- Review the 'Create a Climate of Change' campaign materials: devp.org/climateofchange

BACKGROUND: WHY ARE THERE TWO CREATION STORIES?

The first two chapters of Genesis present two very different Creation Stories (Genesis 1:1-2:4a and Genesis 2:4b-25). These were written at different times with different purposes.

The first Creation Story (Genesis 1:1-2:4a)

The first Creation Story was written by priests around the 6th century before Christ, during or immediately after the Jews' exodus from Egypt, to preserve their identity, tradition and practise in Exile. This story tells us that the Spirit was present, even in the darkness of fear, imprisonment and false belief, and that God is responsible for the light of truth, love and freedom. Egypt was a polytheistic culture, and the exile presented a significant challenge to the Israelites in many ways. This story, an obvious pedagogical tool in its form, repetition and content, emphasizes 3 points. Firstly, that God created all, including the sun, moon and stars – thus, God is more powerful than the other gods, even the gods of those elements. Secondly, God's special relationship to humanity – God created all else and saw that it was good, but created humanity in his own image and saw that it was very good. Thirdly, it reinforced the Sabbath – even God rested on the Sabbath, and so the Israelites must continue to respect the Sabbath day. This first story is meant to preserve Jewish belief and practice in the time of transition, unknown, and hardship in the desert.

The second Creation Story (Genesis 2:4b-25)

The second Creation Story is actually older, written in the 9th or 10th century before Christ, in the time of David and Solomon, by the Yahwists (so called because they referred to God as YHWH in their writings). This was a prosperous time for Israel and the story is a reflection on the origin of humanity and the suffering that is caused by the choice to sin.



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In this story, the Hebrew word for the 'man' that was created first is 'Adamesh' (or Adamah, as the Hebrew letters do not directly correlate to Latin letters), which translates more properly to 'humanity'. Humanity was created, and then named all of God's Creation. Humans were given all of the plants and trees in the Garden of Eden - a lush paradise for the Jews who lived in the desert. It is only when Adamesh is put to sleep and separated into two beings that Adam (masculine) and Eve (feminine) are distinct, created to be partners in caring for the creation God has given them. This story introduces the origin of suffering, the known and unknown lands, and the disparity of resources.

For more information, refer to Vogels, Walter. 2000. *Nor Origines: Genèse 1-11*. Montreal. Bellarmin. pp.20-25.

PROCESS //

Bolded text is the script to be read aloud, italicized text is the scripture (NRSV), and regular text is instruction.

We are now going to look at the Creation Story through the eyes of the people who lived at the time it was written. We have to remember that the Bible is not written as a scientific report, but as a story about God's relationship with humanity from the beginning. The people who lived when the Creation Story was written believed that the world was flat, and that the Sun travelled around the Earth during the day, and underneath it at night. They wondered where everything, the world, the animals, themselves - came from. This is their Creation Story.

¹ *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.* **So we know that in the beginning, God's Spirit was here, before anything else.**

³ *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.* **So, we will now each receive a piece of paper – because we can now see what is being created!** (distribute one paper to each student). **Now listen carefully for your instructions on how to draw Creation – the story gives us instructions.**

And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ *And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky.* **This tells us that we need to draw a dome with some water above it.** (Teacher-leader demonstrates on the board).

⁹ *And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.*

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called the Seas. **So now we need to draw the land and the seas, with water covering about two-thirds of the bottom of the dome.** (Teacher-leader demonstrates and students draw their own).

And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ *Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.* **We need to add plants! We can draw trees, and fruit trees, and grass, and vegetables.** (Pause for a moment to let students add this colourful part).



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And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. **We can now add the Sun on one side of the dome, and the moon on the other side, and stars all around.**

And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. **Alright, add the birds, the whales, the tadpoles, even a flamingo and penguin!** (Pause and allow time to draw).

And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. **So what are cattle and creepy things and wild animals?** (Take a few examples and encourage students to draw these on their land).

And God saw that it was good. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

So – what do we add now? (Provide the students with a moment to add humanity to the picture).

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." **God put us in charge of all the animals, to take care of them and protect them.**

²⁹ God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. **God gave to humanity the plants that make seeds, and every tree with seeds – he told us to take care of natural seeds and to cultivate them for food!** (Students can add a human planting a tree or tending a plant if they wish).

³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.



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2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

*³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. **And not only us, but the earth and the animals got a day of rest too! Our Earth needs time to rest as well. Growing all these plants is hard work!***

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

This is the story of Creation. The message of this story is that God created everything. He created everything to work together in harmony. Creation was only complete when humanity was created. God said that humanity, that you and I, are very good creations! We are his special Creation – and He gave us the mission to look after all of His Creation. He gave that mission to each one of us. (For younger students, you can actually go around the room and tell each student, 'He asked *you* to take care of his creation, and he gave *you* the mission of taking care of creation, and he wants *you* to take care of his creation...').

So what can we do to take care of Creation? (Take ideas from the class and write them on the board – we can reduce what we use, we reuse things as much as possible, we repair things rather than buying new, we recycle. We plant trees, and preserve habitats, we feed birds and ensure flowers for bees, etc). Ask each student to write on a small paper what they will do over the next two weeks to look after God's Creation. What will they do to fulfill their mission? Have them write their names on that paper and place it in the envelope. Consider also writing their commitment in their agendas as a reminder and as a way to involve their families.

The teacher is asked to open the envelope two weeks after this activity to review with their students what they have done to take care of creation. If students have forgotten or not done very much, renew their commitment and find ways to work together. Remind them that God is very pleased with their work, but also with each of them as His special Creations.



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APPENDIX // Genesis 1:1-24a

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so.

Genesis 2:4b-25

2 ^{4b} In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; ⁶ but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— ⁷ then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.



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¹⁰ A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹² and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹ So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

this one shall be called Woman,

for out of Man this one was taken."

²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.