

How Wood Tick Became Flat

A Tale from the Northwestern Band of Shoshone

Cultural Note

To the Shoshone, the elders are their teachers, and the words of the elders are important truths for them. The elders have lived long lives, and their stories guide and protect the Shoshone.

Vocabulary

burrowed

coax

incessantly

crone

measly

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A Tale from the Northwestern Band of Shoshone



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"Grandma Hootchew, Grandma Hootchew, Where are you? We're back!" shouted Tanisha as she raced into her grandmother's home. The screen door slammed behind her as she ran to the kitchen.

Grandma Hootchew pulled a rose berry cobbler from the oven and placed it on the top of the stove. "Kenu, slow down and not too fast! The oven is still very warm," she said as she embraced her granddaughter. "Oh I have missed you! How was your camping trip? Sit down and tell me all about it."



Tanisha sat down at the kitchen table while Grandma dished out warm cobbler.

"Oh, camping was fun. We saw deer and heard the elk bugle in the early morning. Father cut down some lodge pole pine for the tipi. Mother made elk stew with wild onions. The best part was when David had to have a wood tick removed from his neck! That was cool!" said Tanisha.

"What?" cried Grandma Hootchew.

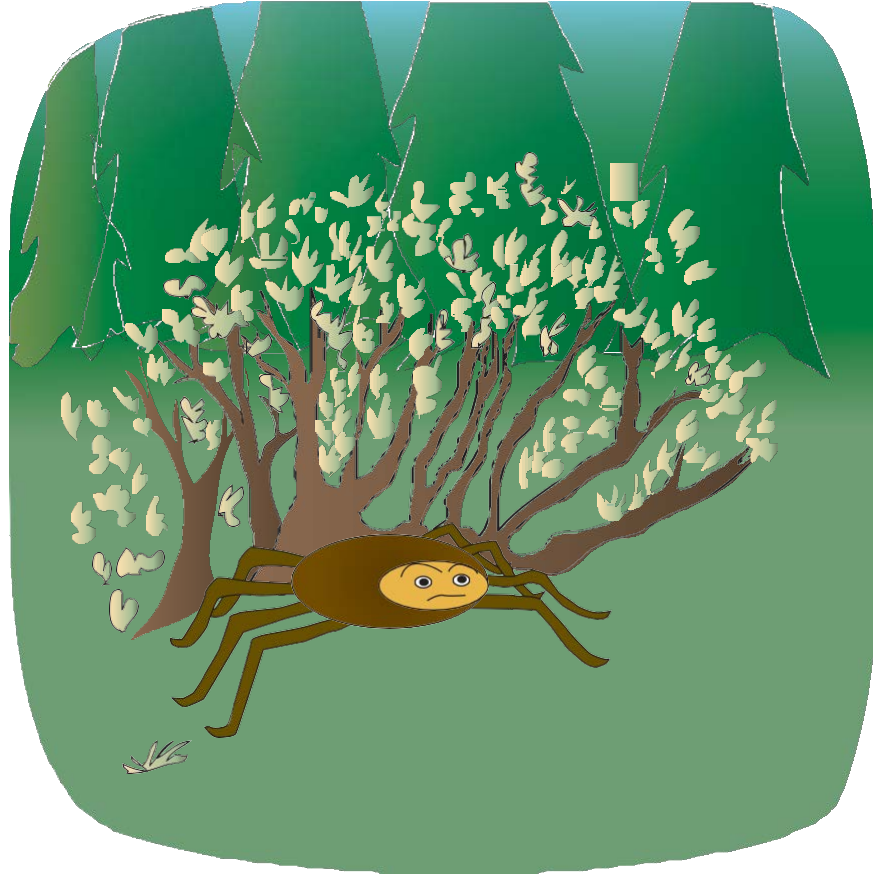
"It had burrowed deep, and Mother had to use pine pitch salve to coax it out. David whooped and hollered the whole time. He's all right, though," said Tanisha.

“So, Metteha, Wood Tick, is still afraid. I suppose it will be many years before she gets over what happened to her,” said Grandma Hootchew.

“What happened to her? What made Wood Tick so afraid, Grandma? Tell me,” coaxed Tanisha.

Tanisha loved to visit Grandma Hootchew because Grandma always had a story to tell. Tanisha took a bite of her cobbler and Grandma sat down, settled herself, and began to speak.





“Long ago, when the animals all spoke the same language, Wood Tick lived under a growth of sage brush with her brood. As hard as she tried to keep peace among her little ones, they quarreled incessantly. They argued about the food, they fought over the toys they owned, and they even battled over who was the meanest. Mother Wood Tick had heard enough. She gathered her children and began telling them of Zoe-Ah- Wye-Yo, the old crone who lived in the forest.

“One day’ warned Wood Tick ‘Zoe-Ah-Wye-Yo, the mean, ill-tempered one, will come and cast her spells upon you. She wanders the land looking for naughty wood ticks, ladybugs, and beetles to throw into her willow basket.’

“N . . naughty w. . wood t. . ticks?’ stammered the little bugs.

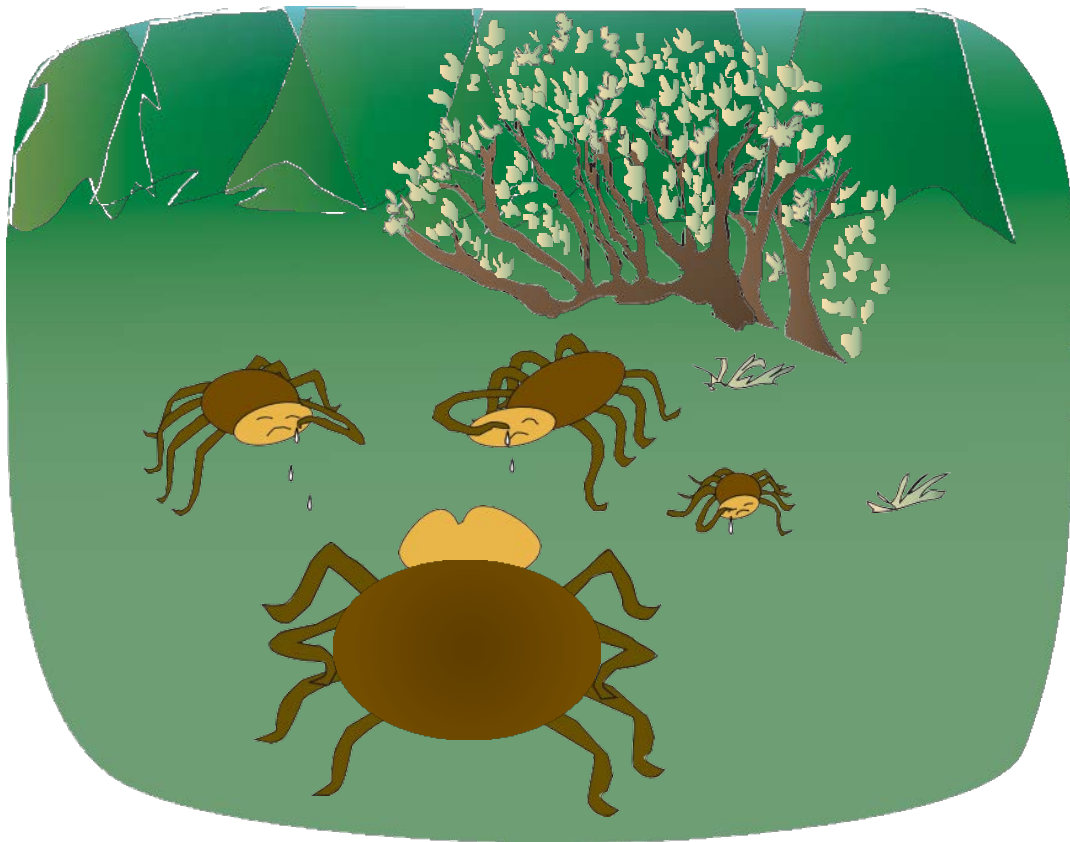
“Yes! Arguing, fighting, battling little bugs are what she hunts for. And you, my little ones, must change your ways before she makes her way to our land and does evil to us all.’



“The children cried and apologized for their bad behavior. They made promises to do better. But it was too late. Zoe-Ah-Wye-Yo had made her way into the sagebrush, and she was not in the mood for naughty ticks, ladybugs or beetles. She had heard Mother Wood Tick describe her as mean, ill-tempered, and evil. ‘Who dares to speak evil of me? Who dares to say I’m ill-tempered? Come out!’ shouted Zoe-Ah-Wye-Yo.

“Mother Wood Tick hid her children under the branches of the sagebrush and stood guard. With one brush of her hand Zoe-Ah-Wye-Yo pulled back the sagebrush limbs to reveal Mother Wood Tick standing there looking at her.

“Go away! You will not find what you are looking for here!’ cried Mother Wood Tick.





"Are you the measly bug that has called me names?" demanded Zoe-Ah-Wye-Yo. She picked up Mother Wood Tick and glared at her.

"Once again Mother Wood Tick cried, 'Go away! You will not find what you are looking for here!'

"Zoe-Ah-Wye-Yo shook with rage. She threw Mother Wood Tick to the ground and began stamping on her poor back. Mother Wood Tick, who had once been plump and round, became flat and slightly oval. When Zoe-Ah-Wye-Yo's anger was spent, she stomped away.

Mother Wood Tick's children rushed out from under the low branches of the sagebrush. 'Mother! Mother! Are you alive? Are you all right?' they cried.



“Mother Wood Tick slowly lifted herself up from the ground. She was battered and bruised, but most important, she had saved her children. The children kept to their word and were no longer quarrelsome. They became obedient, kind, and happy.”

“Grandma, what about Mother Wood Tick?” asked Tanisha. “Why is she still so afraid?”

“Mother Wood Tick is flat to this day, and she never got over the need to protect her children. She burrows deep into any creature she sees as a threat to distract them from her little ones. Her fear comes from the thought of anyone harming them,” said Grandmother Hootchew.

“Mother Wood Tick burrowed deep into David to cause a distraction?” murmured Tanisha.





"Yes, my granddaughter. All the creatures, great and small, have a need to protect their children."

"Grandmothers too?" asked Tanisha.

"Yes, Little One, grandmothers too," smiled Grandma Hootchew as she took a bite of the rose berry cobbler.

Glossary

huttsi - grandma

huuppi - bush

kenu - granddaughter (woman's)

metteha - wood tick

Zoe-Ah-Wye-Yo - mean, ill-tempered one

Reading Suggestions

- Do you have a favorite food your grandma makes? Visit her and make it with her or get the recipe and make it at home. Discuss the food pyramid with your family.
- A cinquain is a five-line verse based on a pattern:
Line 1: One word – title
Line 2: Two words - describing the title
Line 3: Three words - action words about the title
Line 4: Four words - feelings – verbs
Line 5: One word - repeat title or use a synonym

Winter

Snowy, blowy

Sliding, skidding, skimming

Icy fingers cutting through

Snappy season

- Write your own cinquain about an animal or object in the story.

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