

A Native American Story

Turtle's Pond

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Turtle loved his home. In the small pond where he lived, there were always plenty of fish to eat, and whenever he wanted, he could nap in his favourite sunny spot. If it got too hot for Turtle, the trees around the pond gave lots of shade.

When the weather grew cold, Turtle swam to the bottom of his pond, burrowed into the mud, and went to sleep for the winter. Yes, Turtle was very happy with his excellent home.

One winter, Turtle slept longer than usual. When he woke, it was still dark. As he swam to the top of the pond, Turtle noticed that the water was a lot deeper. When he got to the surface, he saw that the pond was a lot bigger as well.

Then Turtle saw Beaver. "What have you done to my pond?" cried Turtle.

"What do you mean *your* pond. It's my pond," said Beaver, slapping the water with his big flat tail, "and it's much better now with the changes I've made!"





Turtle looked about. "Where are all my beautiful trees?" he cried. "Where will I take my nap when it's sunny?"

"Actually, I think they were *my* trees," said Beaver, "and I needed them to build a dam. The pond was too small for me. It needed to be deep so I can build my lodge, and that's just what I'm about to do if you'll excuse me." Beaver hurried away and began to chew at a tree trunk.

"But this is my home," Turtle shouted after him. "It's always been my home. I want it back just the way it was."

"That's too bad," said Beaver. "I live here now. You'll just have to get used to it."

Turtle was very upset, but he wasn't going to give up that easily. "I'll fight you for it," he said.

"That's fine by me," said Beaver, showing his long sharp teeth—the same teeth that had cut down the trees.

"Wait!" shouted Turtle. "I have a better idea. Let's have a diving contest. Whoever loses has to leave the pond."

"Great! A diving contest," boasted Beaver. "I can stay underwater for a whole day."

"Wait!" shouted Turtle. "I have an even better idea. Let's have a race."

"A race? What kind of race?" asked Beaver.

"A race from one side of the pond to the other," said Turtle.

"First across the pond gets to keep it."

Beaver laughed and laughed, slapping the water with his tail. "You're as slow as a snail. You wouldn't have a hope of beating me in a swimming race," he chortled. "You'd better get ready to pack your shell."

"We'll see," said Turtle, smiling to himself.

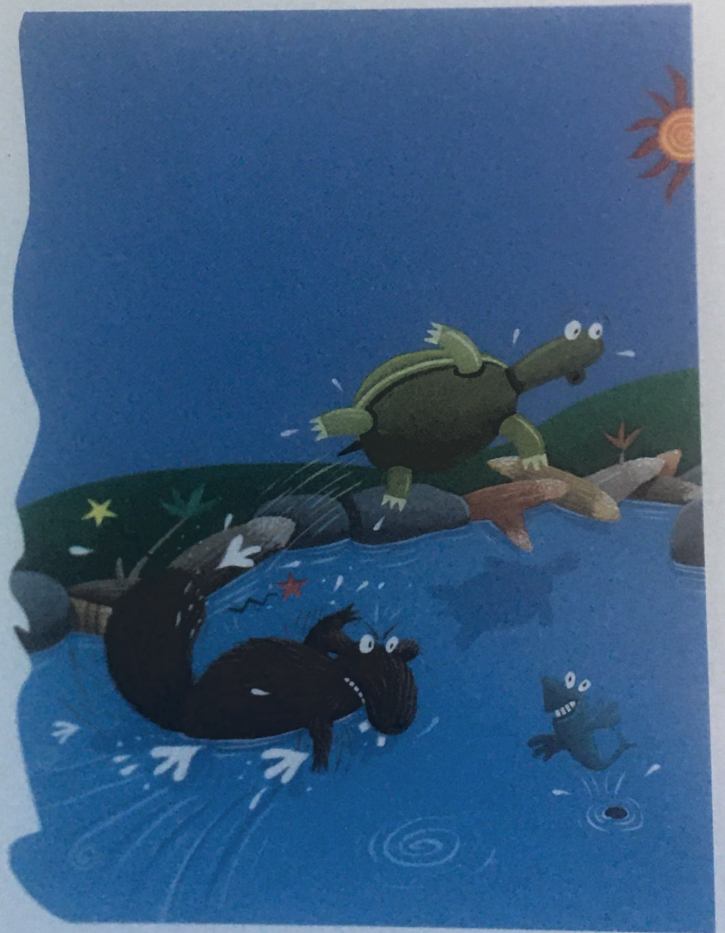
So Turtle and Beaver lined up at the side of the pond.

"Three, two, one . . . GO!" called Turtle.

Beaver shot away. He was a very fast swimmer, but just as he left the side of the pond . . . "Ouch!" He felt something nip his tail, but he didn't stop to find out what it was. He wanted to win the race. Instead, he swung his tail back and forth and up and down. He was trying to flick away whatever it was that was nipping him. Whatever it was just held on more tightly.

As Beaver got close to the other side of the pond, things got so bad that he lifted his tail up high and flicked it really hard. Turtle, who had been hanging onto it the whole time, let go and was flung out of the pond and onto the bank.

When Beaver looked up, he couldn't believe his eyes. Turtle was sitting looking at him, and he wasn't even puffing. He realized that Turtle had beaten him, but he couldn't understand how it had happened.





"We made a deal," said Turtle. "Whoever reached the other side first got to keep the pond. Good-bye!"

When Beaver had left, Turtle settled down for a nice long nap. All the excitement had made him feel very tired.

In time, the trees around the pond grew back, and because his pond was bigger and deeper now, there were even more fish to eat. Yes, Turtle was very happy with his home.

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1. What are the three challenges Turtle made to Beaver to keep the pond?

1.

2.

3.

2. Explain why Beaver laughed and laughed when Turtle suggested having a race to see who would keep the pond.

3. Complete the chart giving two ways that Turtle and Beaver are alike and two ways they are different.

Turtle and Beaver	Alike	Different
	1.	1.
	2.	2.

4. Who do you think was smarter—Beaver or Turtle? Use details from the text to support your answer.

5. Beaver and Turtle each should have learned a lesson from what happened in the story. Explain the lesson each should have learned, using details from the text to support your answer.