



# THE OTTER, THE SPOTTED FROG & THE GREAT FLOOD

## ABOUT THE BOOK

- “A Great Flood is coming. Soon it will cover the land. I sing so you can save yourselves,” said Spotted Frog
- Based on a traditional tale from the Creek Indians of northern Florida and Georgia, this story of a pending environmental disaster tells of Listener the Otter, the only animal to heed the warnings of Spotted Frog. Ridiculed by the other animals, Listener begins to build a raft to try and survive the approaching flood. But will his efforts be enough?
- Stunning artwork and flowing narrative combine to teach the value of listening to the wisdom of the natural world around us
- Learn how even the smallest and humblest of creatures have something to teach us about the environment
- Likened to the story of Noah and the great flood from the Old Testament
- Offers an opportunity to show that cultures often contain stories with similar motifs and teachings

*From the Author of Five NCSS  
Notable Books*

Finalist in the “Children’s Picture Book:  
Hardcover Fiction” category of  
The USA “Best Books 2013” Awards

“In beautifully direct prose, Hausman evokes Listener [the Otter]’s diligence and the watery cataclysm he survives.... [Shiloh’s] pictures are woven into the story and range from folk art-like motifs to strikingly realistic portraiture, creating a sense of a Native American illuminated manuscript.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gerald Hausman is an award-winning writer, editor, and storyteller who has published over 70 titles from around the world. As a storyteller, Gerald has entertained children at such places as the Kennedy Center, Harvard University, and St. John’s College.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ramon Shiloh is an author, artist, and public speaker. Dedicated to supporting art programs for children and Native youth, he served as a mentor for the “Young Native Voices: Theater Education Project” at the Autry National Center.

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# THE OTTER, THE SPOTTED FROG & THE GREAT FLOOD — WISDOM TALES DISCUSSION GUIDES

1. Where did the story *come from*? Who told it and how did it *reach us* today?

**Answer:** It came from the Creek Indians of Georgia and Northern Florida. Storytellers *told* the story; it was not written down until the 18th century or perhaps later.

2. What is the significance of *four* in the story? Why are there *four* days in which the story is told? Why is Spotted Frog thrown into the fire *four* times?

**Answer:** In the native world, four is representative of the four seasons, the four directions, the four members of the human family, and the four stages of life in general.

3. What is the significance of the animal people's *names*?

**Answer:** In every society, names have always come from things that people do. In Anglo Saxon society names like Wheelwright, Strongheart, and Houseman have significance and are related to occupations, qualities, and talents.

4. Is there anything to learn from this ancient story of *bad weather*? How is the Great Flood presented in Ramon Shiloh's illustrations? How is water shown in the images of the book? What is the significance of the sun image? How does the sun appear with the water? Are they related to one another?

**Answer:** In Day Two there is a depiction of the water deity or goddess; on the following page we see the image of harmony between earth and sky. Weather is not presented in opposition but merely as a fact of life, a reality, a power source with its own energy. The sun is always a part of everything holy, as the sun represents the Sun Father just as the earth represents the Earth Mother. In the native world the so-called forces of nature can be forceful without being forces of evil or the catalyst for terrible events. They are merely things that happen.

5. What is a *prophet*? Why is Spotted Frog's warning a *prophecy*? What is a prophecy?

**Answer:** A prophet is one who knows something that others cannot see. The prophecy is what will come, what will happen. The significance of this is that it *does* happen.

6. Why did Honors Himself *not* listen to the prophecy? Why did other animal people not listen?

**Answer:** There are people who seem to understand what will happen before it happens. They are the listeners. There are also people who only believe in the things they can see right before their eyes. Honors Himself is a person who believes he is right all of the time; he doesn't honor others, only himself and his opinions.

7. What happened to the animal people who did not listen?

**Answer:** In most native stories conclusions are not made by liking good people and not liking bad people. So, in this origin tale we learn that the people who did not listen to Spotted Frog's prophecy are not punished by being wiped out; they come back as mosquito people. In the native world a mosquito person is not a lesser form of life, but rather a part of all life. People of the wetlands understand how important the mosquito is to the food chain.

8. What can we learn from this story *today*?

**Answer:** There are many applications in this and all stories that stay with the human race for hundreds of years. One of the best is—listen to all things. Pay attention to all life. Be a listener!

9. This story is believed to be *an origin tale*. What is an origin tale?

**Answer:** Origin tales tell us how we started out, how we began as animal people and two-legged people. Origin tales explain why things came to be the way they are. An example would be how red-shouldered hawk (shown in Ramon Shiloh's illustrations) and redbelted hawk got rust-colored feathers. Turkey's tail tip turns white as a result of the flood waters. Origin tales also show us how we can live better on this earth; how we can share; how we can live during times of change.

10. How can you be a better *listener*? Who or what would you be listening to? What can you do to *protect* the earth?

**Answer:** This is really a personal question to be answered individually by each individual who reads or hears the story.

