

## Language Arts

**Legends** are stories that come down from the past, based on the traditions of a people or region.

### Literary Elements

The **Hero** is the main character in a legend who usually does something brave to help others.

**Personification** is the assignment of human characteristics to an animal, thing, or idea.

# How Poison Came Into the World

*retold by Paul Sirls*

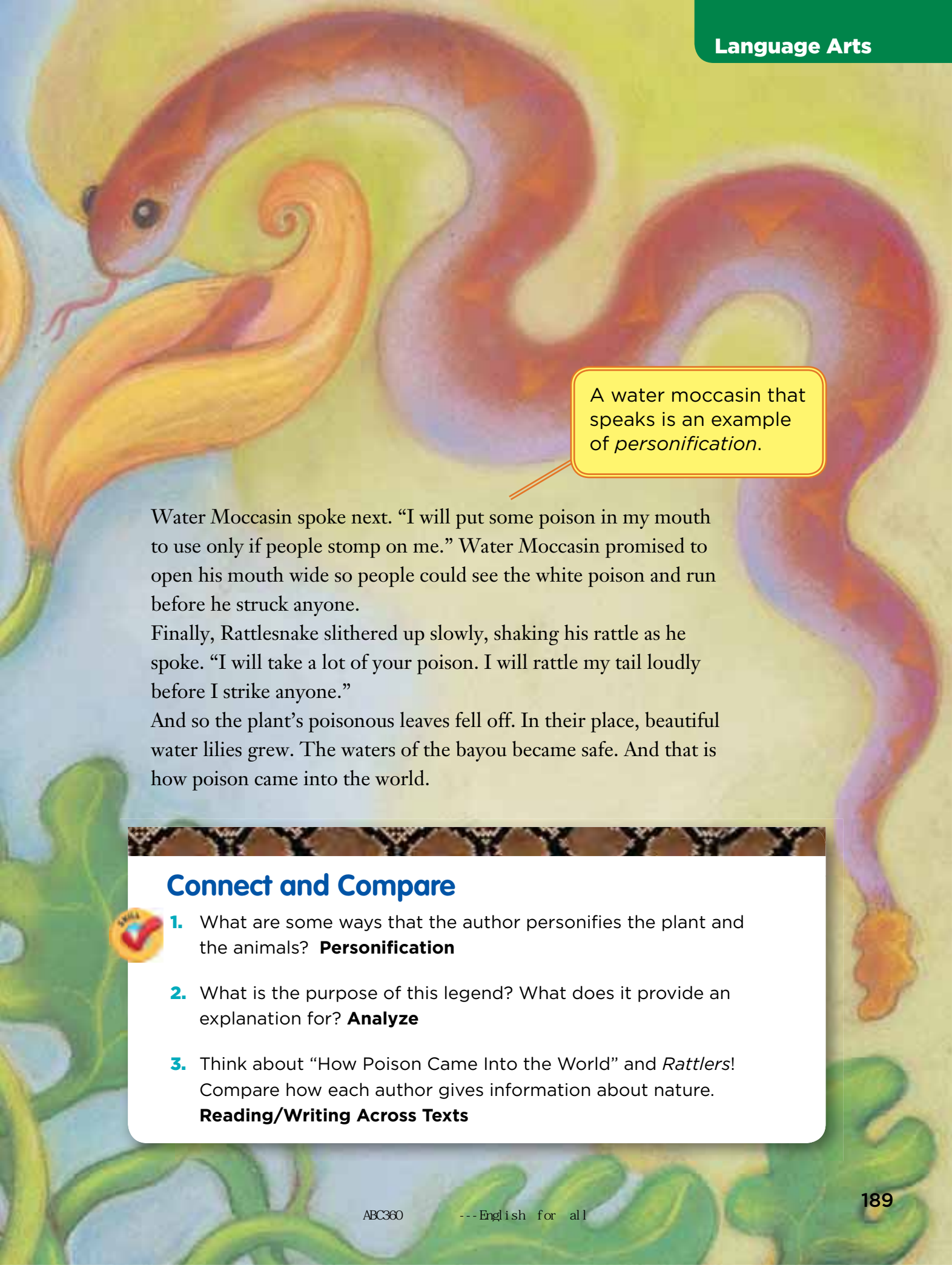
Long ago, when Earth was young, the Choctaw people loved to swim in the cool waters of the bayou. But the Choctaw had to be very careful when swimming because a poisonous plant grew in the heart of the bayou. This plant lived below the surface, so swimmers could not see it until it was too late.

The plant, however, did not want to hurt his friends the Choctaw. As more people fell ill, the poor plant became sadder and sadder. Finally, he decided to give away his poison. The plant called the chiefs of the wasps and snakes to meet with him. He asked them to take his poison.

Wasp shouted out his answer first. "I will put a little poison in my tail. It will help me keep my nest safe."

Wasp also promised to make a buzzing sound before he stung anyone.

The plant is the *hero* in this legend.



A water moccasin that speaks is an example of *personification*.

Water Moccasin spoke next. “I will put some poison in my mouth to use only if people stomp on me.” Water Moccasin promised to open his mouth wide so people could see the white poison and run before he struck anyone.

Finally, Rattlesnake slithered up slowly, shaking his rattle as he spoke. “I will take a lot of your poison. I will rattle my tail loudly before I strike anyone.”

And so the plant’s poisonous leaves fell off. In their place, beautiful water lilies grew. The waters of the bayou became safe. And that is how poison came into the world.

## Connect and Compare



1. What are some ways that the author personifies the plant and the animals? **Personification**
2. What is the purpose of this legend? What does it provide an explanation for? **Analyze**
3. Think about “How Poison Came Into the World” and *Rattles!* Compare how each author gives information about nature.

### Reading/Writing Across Texts



## Writer's Craft

### A Strong Conclusion

A persuasive letter flows smoothly from beginning to end. Base a **strong conclusion** on the details you have written. Be sure to sum up your thoughts about your topic.

I wanted to explain my opinion about reptiles. I included these details.

I summed up my thoughts with a strong conclusion.

# Write About Your Opinion

Springfield Herald

22 Main St.

Springfield, TX

July 1

Dear Editor:

My favorite exhibit at the zoo is the Reptile House. Every time I visit I am more convinced that reptiles are not as dangerous as people think.

These creatures are no threat to people passing through the Reptile House. They are kept in locked cages and a security guard patrols every aisle.

Outside in the woods people are also too afraid of reptiles. Very few humans are attacked by reptiles each year. They usually need to be provoked before they will bite. If people knew all the facts about reptiles, they would appreciate them much more.

Sincerely,

Isabel S.

Fifth-Grade Student

## Your Turn

Write a letter to the editor about how you would improve your school or community. State your opinion clearly and include a strong conclusion. Remember that people will be more likely to read your letter if you give good reasons for your opinion. Use the writer's checklist to check your writing.



## Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Does the letter have a **strong conclusion**?
- Organization:** Do the ideas in the letter follow in a logical order?
- Voice:** Did I make it clear that I care about my topic? Do I sound as though I am talking to the reader?
- Word Choice:** Did I choose words that express my feelings?
- Sentence Fluency:** Did I use a variety of sentence types?
- Conventions:** Did I use proper punctuation for a formal letter? Did I check my spelling?