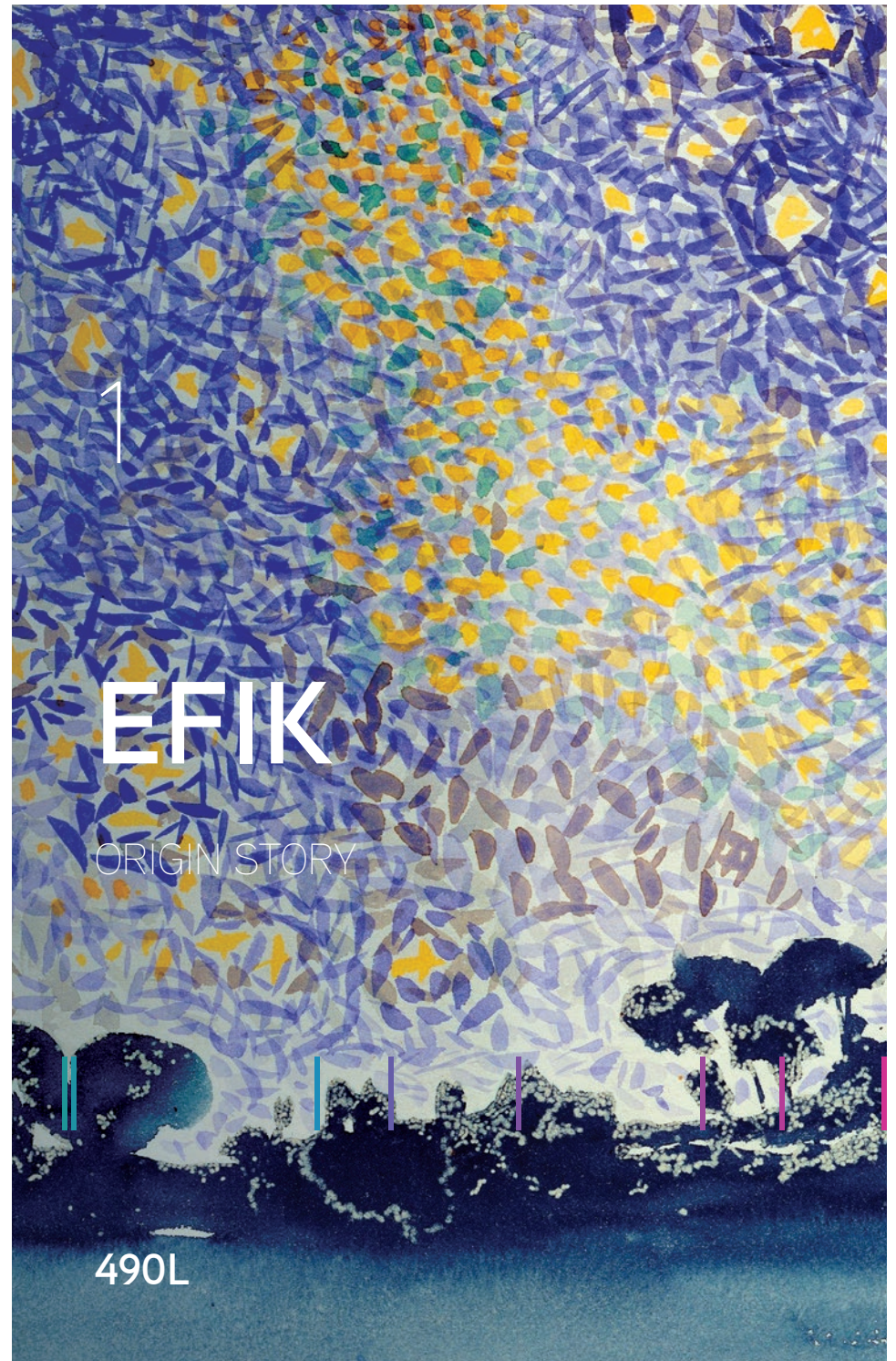




BIG HISTORY PROJECT



1

# EFIK

ORIGIN STORY

490L

# EFIK

ABASSI, GOD  
OF THE UNIVERSE

Compiled by David Baker, adapted by Newsela

This origin story comes from the Efik people of Nigeria. They were the first humans to go against the rules of the gods. They did so to become more powerful and wiser.

*The Efik people live in southern Nigeria. For hundreds of years they've lived near the Cross River. They worshipped the god Abassi. To them, Abassi was the greatest creator. Their belief system was very relaxed. They had no priests or temples. Families and individuals had their own prayers and customs. Their creation story is a tale of humans disobeying the gods.*

*Before Abassi there was nothing. Abassi was god of the Universe. He was the giver of life, death, and justice. He was so powerful that he could create life, and heal the sick. Abassi could even bring the dead back to life. Some say that Abassi was the Sun. So they worshipped it as it rose and set every day. Abassi lived in the sky with his wife. Her name was Atai. She was a wise goddess. Atai often gave Abassi good advice.*

*Abassi made the stars, the Earth, and all wildlife. He also made two humans, a man and a woman. These humans lived with Abassi and Atai in the sky. They were very innocent and knew very little. Abassi and Atai looked after them. They protected the humans. They even fed them, because they did not know how to feed themselves. One day, the humans were looking down from the sky at the Earth. They decided they wanted to live there. They asked Abassi if they could leave the sky and live on the Earth. But Abassi said no. The Earth was a place with many secrets. Many things could be learned down there. Abassi feared that the humans would one day become as wise as him, or even wiser.*

*Atai offered the humans a deal. The humans could go live on Earth. However, they had to return to the sky every day to eat. The humans were forbidden to learn to hunt or farm. They were also forbidden to marry and have children. Atai worried that if they had children they would create a large nation of people. With so many people humans could challenge the power of Abassi.*

*For a while, this plan worked. The humans returned to the sky every day to eat. However, one day, the woman decided she was sick of being fed like a helpless child. She went out into the fields and began to farm. Then the time came for dinner. This time she refused to return to the sky with the man.*

*The next day, the man visited the woman in the fields. He saw that she was growing her own food. He decided to help her. Before long, the man and woman fell in love. They did not return to the sky again. Many years went by and they had many children. When their children grew, they joined their parents working in the field. They all continued to learn the secrets of the Earth and teach them to each other.*

*The humans tried to hide their children. But Abassi saw them. He grew very angry. He blamed his wife, Atai. She had been the one who convinced him to let the humans live on Earth.*

*But Atai had a plan. To stop the humans from growing too powerful, she sent evil into the world. She sent death and caused humans to fight with one another. The man and woman immediately died. Their children have suffered ever since. Humans continue to argue among themselves. But because their mother disobeyed the gods, the humans have continued to learn the secrets of the Earth.*

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