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Focus on Miniatures: Turtles

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About 320 species of turtles inhabit freshwater, terrestrial, and marine ecosystems on every continent of our world except Antarctica and its waters (Langlois, 2014). Therefore, it is unsurprising that turtles are present in various cultures, folklore, and legends worldwide.

They are known to be slow-moving beings that travel long distances. The turtle is viewed as a primordial symbol of strength, creation, containment, and transformation. Many see the turtle as a mother archetype (Grishko, 2012).



In many North American creation stories of the Anishinabe and Cree, our world (Turtle Island) was built on the back of the turtle because the turtle offered this sacrifice. Therefore, the earth is closely connected to the turtle, and they are some of the oldest beings that have witnessed many truths and stories. Turtles can be viewed as the Icon of life.

"When Europeans made contact with the First Nations peoples of the Americas, it was evident that some Indigenous peoples followed a lunar calendar" (Government of Canada, 2024). This lunar representation was linked to the turtle. On the turtle's back are 13 circles, which some believe represent 13 moons each year. On the outside of the turtle's shell, there are 28 circles. The moon circles the Earth every 28 days.

Since turtles have been on earth for so long, they share many wonderful truths. They teach us to move slowly through life, to be careful, and to pay attention to what is around us (Greenfield, n.d.).

Giving us insight on the use of the turtle figure in the sand tray are four sand therapists from the United State with R.P., RPT™, LSW, and LPC-S designations. They shared that they work weekly

with clients aged 0-18. Two therapists work with people up to 65 years of age and families; one works with groups. Two therapists indicated that they are Adlerian in their sand therapy focus.

The therapists indicated that the turtle shows up in sandtray worlds to provide support by demonstrating "grit, patience, and consistency." Turtles are used to symbolically demonstrate protection and show how there are times when we all feel the need to hide. Turtles can also help people communicate that, at times, they may feel left behind.

One therapist indicated that children are drawn to the turtle viewed in the movie *Finding Nemo* (Stanton & Unkrich, 2003). Many builders create water and ocean scenes with turtles (more often than the tortoise). Included within these worlds are miniatures of sharks, octopuses, and crabs.

The turtle can communicate support, safety, perseverance, and peace as well as the experience of being shy and even introverted.

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To view a sample of the Creation story- *Turtle Island* - [please view here](#).

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