

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY – Questions about First Nations People

Curriculum Connections

Social Studies: Grade 6

History: Grade 7

What do you know about First Nations people?

A helpful resource is *Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools: Guide for Staff* by the Lakehead District School Board.

For more information, visit the website:
<http://www.lakeheadschools.ca/aboriginal/>

Suggested questions for grade 4-6 audiences:

1. What do you already know about First Nations people?
2. What is a reserve? Why do many First Nations people live on a reserve?
3. Who are Elders? Why are they important?
4. What First Nations stories or songs do you know?
5. What examples of dance, drama, music, and visual arts in Native cultures have you seen, heard, or do you know about?

Suggested questions for grade 7-8 audiences:

1. What assumptions do people make about First Nations people (e.g., they only live in rural areas)?
2. What are some of the challenges faced by our First Nations people (e.g., poverty)?
3. Why are some of our First Nations people not living on reserves and why have they left (e.g., schooling, living conditions, etc.)?
4. Who are the Métis?
5. Can you think of a famous aboriginal artist, songwriter, actor, or performer?

Teacher Note: You may want to reference Norval Morriseau, Buffy St. Marie, Susan Aglukark, Corrine Hunt, Graeme Greene, Tomson Highway, or Drew Hayden Taylor.

Videos of Visual Artists in Greater Sudbury



Have your Junior/Intermediate students see and hear from working Ontario visual artists. Dr. Kathy Browning from Laurentian University has produced a diverse series of videos from interviews with a number of contemporary northern Ontario artists. ETFO has recommended a grouping of northern artists that are Aboriginal, Metis and well-known in the north for use in Junior/Intermediate classrooms. A second of artists is appropriate for Intermediate classrooms. All videos have the artists discuss and highlight aspects of their artwork and lives. These videos are a wonderful resource for school communities where access to art galleries or working artists is limited.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES - Using "Clips from the Script"

Curriculum Connections/Expectations

Music/Drama: All grades - B1.1, B2.1

Dance: All grades - A1.2, A1.1

Music: All grades - C3.2, C1.3

Visual Arts: All grades - D1.4

It is important not only to begin to build context and access prior knowledge, but to make students curious about the story/play.



Pre-viewing

A quick and effective pre-viewing activity is to give each student a short clip from the play (see "Clips from the Script" on page 3) before entering the theatre. Ask students to listen carefully during the performance for their line(s). This gives the viewer a reason to listen attentively.

After the play, have students write or talk about their line(s): Who said it? To whom? Why did they say it? Where was it said? How was it said? Were you surprised in any way? Was your mental picture or prediction correct?

Writing/Drama

Give each student a clip from the play (see "Clips from the Script" on page 3). Ask the students to read and respond to their clip in writing with predictions. What do they think it means? Suggest the following prompts:

- I imagine ...
- I think ...
- I feel ...
- I wonder ...

In small groups, suggest that students create tableaux (frozen pictures) to capture the clip from the script that they were assigned. For example, "Clips from the Script" could be read aloud by a student not involved in the tableau while the students in the tableau hold their positions.

Dance/Movement

Have students put the lines from "Clips from the Script" in an order they think is logical and choose three of them to turn into tableaux. Challenge the students to find a way to transition between each frozen image using creative movement. This will create an instant dance phrase.



Clips from the Script

... Can you be a cowboy and an Indian?

You must catch that horse, my son. Only that way will things be right.

I want a dad like everyone else's ...

You learn to read. You learn to read or that horse goes.

What am I supposed to do with a horse in the city?

It's just a horse.

I was scared but it was quiet under the water.

That horse belongs to no one.

The old ways are behind me.

The person who can catch and ride a spirit horse gains all its power.

I'd dig up your bones if I thought it would bring you back.

We're a horse people. Grandpa told us so.

She wanted our baby to be born at the foot of our mountain.

... this is a miracle horse, and we have every hope that she is going to win ...

... it's our mountain. We're named after it and it's named after us.

I've spent seven years in hell without her. Seven years blaming myself for letting her die.

Look, I know you natives have your own special ways. We have to keep things civilized.

You don't know where your children are? What kind of father are you, letting your kids do your dirty work.

Why did she die on my birthday?

All three of them plunged down into the dark water and were gone.

She was a spirit horse wasn't she? And she brought me to mom, didn't she?

Using "Clips from the Script"

Continued....

It is important not only to begin to build context and access prior knowledge, but to make students curious about the story/play.

Try getting students to hold each tableau for the count of eight and make their transition evolve to the count of eight. Remind the students to consider the elements of tableau that include varying levels and use of space.

Predicting

After viewing the tableaux of others, ask the students to try to predict what the story of *Spirit Horse* is about. Record any questions that seem unanswered.

Drama/Script Writing

In pairs, have students create and write the "next lines" that they think come after the ones they were assigned from the script. Students should decide:

- Who is speaking;
- Where they are from;
- How and why they are speaking.

Share the "next lines" with the class. Students can imagine that their assigned selection is the opening of a scene in the play (or the ending).

Visual Arts Responses

Have students illustrate the particular clip they were assigned, or one that the whole class is assigned. For example, students might wish to create storyboard/comic style drawings with word and thought bubbles, or paint what a spirit horse looks like based on the lines from the selections that describe one.

Music Sound Tracks

Have students create or choose a sound track for their line. Some discussion and practice with this is important. Have them watch and listen to clips from movies and experiment with creating atmospheric sounds using their bodies, their environment, musical instruments, and found objects.

Post-viewing

Have the students use the following prompts for writing about their assigned clip after they see the play:

- I still wonder ...
- Now I think/know/believe ...
- I now feel ...

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES: Using a Picture Book as Inspiration

Curriculum Connections/Expectations

All Grades/All Strands - A, B, C, D (emphasis on Creating and Presenting components)

Drama: Grades 3 to 8 - B.1.1

Music - C1.1

Picture books are a great source for Arts learning and lessons that simultaneously support literacy strategies. The Arts offer interesting ways to respond to the stories, themes, and concepts in picture books.

Explore the picture book “What’s the Most Beautiful Thing You Know about Horses?” with these activities:

Pre-reading

Before reading aloud the picture book *What’s the Most Beautiful Thing You Know about Horses?* ask the students to share what they know about horses, what they think the most beautiful thing is about horses, and why they think this.

Later, make a connection between this activity and a question that arises in the play: *What makes something or someone “beautiful”?*

Artwork

Ask students to look closely at the cover of the book:

- What do they notice about the artwork of the cover?
- What do they notice about the horses?
Record words that describe the way the artist has used the six elements (line, colour, shape, form—the illusion of 3D, space, and texture). This may be done on chart paper and the vocabulary can be used at a later time to support literacy activities such as poetry writing.
- What do they notice about the colours, the lines, the shapes, the dots?
- How do the students think the cover was created ... paint? pastels? crayon?

Using a Picture Book as Inspiration

Continued...

What's The Most Beautiful Thing You Know about Horses?

Story by:
Richard Van Camp

Pictures by:
George Littlechild



Looking and Listening

Read the story aloud. Ask students to attend carefully to the story and the illustrations. What did they notice about the artwork? Have students review all the responses in the story that made horses beautiful. Discuss and compare what they think make people “beautiful”.

Imagining and Creating

Brainstorm/discuss the meaning of the word “spirit”. Ask students to imagine their own Spirit Horse and use questions to develop their concept and understanding of their horse.

- What is your horse like?
- How did it get its name?
- What is the most beautiful thing about your Spirit Horse?
- What makes your Spirit Horse special?
- Does it have any unusual powers or gifts?
- Where does your Spirit Horse come from?

Dance/Movement/Music

Have students physically demonstrate how their Spirit Horse would travel and move. What kind of music would best accompany their Spirit Horse as it travels and moves? Create soundscapes to accompany the movement and descriptions of their Spirit Horse using body percussion, vocal sounds, found objects, or instruments. Have students choreograph a movement composition that explores the moods, feelings, and adventures of their Spirit Horse.

Visual Arts

After discussing the elements in his illustrations, use the inspiration of George Littlechild’s artwork to have students create their own drawing or painting of their Spirit Horse.

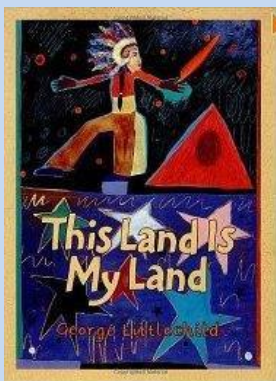
Drama

Create a drama scenario that students have to problem-solve. Students can take on different roles in the drama, from townspeople to authority figures.

For example: Horses are becoming endangered and have to be saved. A band meeting is called by local Aboriginal leaders to come up with a plan to save horses from extinction.

Using a Picture Book as Inspiration

Continued...



Writing in Role

Invite students to write in role as their Spirit Horse explaining how they came to be and sharing their message with the world.

Other picture books to use and share by Richard Van Camp and George Littlechild:

A Man Called Raven, San Francisco Children's Book Press, 1997.

This Land Is My Land, Children's Book Press: First Trade Paper Edition, 2003.

Other recommended picture books:

Between Earth & Sky: Legends of Native American Sacred Places by Joseph Bruchac, Sandpiper, 1999.

The First Strawberries by Joseph Bruchac, Puffin Books, 2005.

Jingle Dancer by Cynthia Leitich Smith, Harper Collins, 2000.

Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada by Diane Silvey, Kids Can Press, 2005.

The Red Sash by Jean E. Pendziwol, Groundwood Books, 2005.

Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back by Joseph Bruchac, Putnam Juvenile, 1997.

ADVANCED PRE-ACTIVITY – Quests & Magical Realism

Learning about the elements of Quests and Magical Realism



Quest Story

Spirit Horse is a quest story where the characters set out in search of an object or a place that they believe will bring them happiness or security. In such stories, characters are often spurred to their quest by a legend or a secret map that has been handed down from generation to generation. Quest stories are generally full of acts of bravery, near mishaps, and magical persons or objects that help or hinder them along the way.

Magic Realism

The genre of theatre that best describes *Spirit Horse* is known as “Magic Realism” or “Magical Realism”. In this genre, realistic people and events are interwoven with elements of the fantastical or the impossible. Through a suspension of disbelief, we accept these magical elements as real (e.g., *Harry Potter*, the TV show *Heroes*).

Review the following elements found in many magical realist works. Discuss these elements with your intermediate students and have them look for examples while they watch *Spirit Horse* and share them after the play:

- Fantastical elements are presented as if they are realistic elements – yet they are never explained.
- The characters accept rather than question the logic of the magical elements.
- The play or story uses symbols and imagery extensively.
- Time in the story is distorted so that it is cyclical (repeats itself) or so that it appears absent.
- The story incorporates legends or folklore.
- The plot presents events from multiple viewpoints that shift because of action or memories.
- There is an open-ended conclusion which leaves the reader to determine whether the magical and/or ordinary events are more “real”.