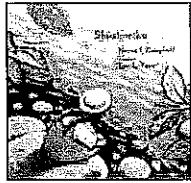


Activity 1.1

Remembering the Land



Resources

- *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola Campbell
- Video: Shi-shi-etko
- Blackline Master 1 Sort and Predict, page 21

Vocabulary

fragrant
gesturing
kinnikinnick
patchwork quilt
rhythmic
sinew
sprig
tanned deer hide

Summary

Introduce the unit with the story of *Shi-shi-etko*. A young girl spends the last three days before leaving home for school with different members of her family who teach her about the significance of the land. She collects various plants to put in a memory bag, to hold her remembrances of the land while she is away. Remembering the past is a major theme in the story of Indian Residential Schools, and this element of the story serves to introduce it in a poetic way.

The type of school she is going away to is not specifically mentioned, but there are some clues that can help students create questions about where she is going and why.

The story is rich with sensory imagery, and so offers opportunities for an English Language Arts study of the use of language.

Key Concepts

- Respect for the land is at the centre of First Nations culture and education.
- In traditional First Nations culture, education was a family matter.
- A writers' use of sensory imagery enhances the meaning of a story

Key Questions

- In what ways can people show respect for the land?
- What are different ways that we learn?
- Why is remembering the past important for understanding the present and the future?
- How do writers use the five senses to bring meaning to their stories?

Background

- The presence of family is very significant in this story. In the three days before her departure, Shi-shi-etko's mother, father and grandmother take her out on the land to reinforce their teachings. Mother takes her to the creek and teaches her to remember the land and the ways of her people. Father takes her out in his canoe and also tells her to always remember the land – the trees, mountains and water; he also sings her grandfather's paddle song. Her Yayah (grandmother) takes her into the forest where they gather plants to put into a memory bag.
- An important theme to be found in the story is the strength of the elders, and the community's desire for survival by holding on to their culture and beliefs.
- The number four is significant in many Aboriginal cultures, and in some is considered sacred. Many aspects of the natural world can be divided into four divisions, such as the four seasons and the four directions.

- When Shi-shi-etko leaves her memory bag at the base of the big fir tree, she also leaves a pinch of tobacco. Students may not be aware that tobacco is a traditional offering used by many First Nations people. It has several sacred uses, including giving thanks to the land, expressed by Shi-shi-etko as Grandfather Tree.

Suggested Activities

1. Reading Shi-shi-etko

Reading Strategies

- Before reading you may want to begin with a sort and predict activity using the word list on Blackline Master 1.
- As a purpose for listening while you read the book aloud, ask students to listen to find out what the family members teach Shi-shi-etko.

Video

A 12 minute video of Shi-shi-etko was produced in 2009. You may be able to borrow it locally. It is available for purchase at http://movingimages.ca/store/products.php?shi_shi_etko. (Note: there is also a 6 minute segment of the video available on Youtube.)

2. Sensory Images

Ask students to recall some of the descriptions of different senses Shi-shi-etko experiences. You may want to re-read the book for students to listen for the sensory images, or have them work in groups with copies of the book to construct word lists of the five senses.

- Lead a discussion about how the use of sensory images adds to our appreciation and understanding of the story.
- Use a writing activity to allow students to use imagery, such as
 - given a topic, write a word or phrase for each of the five senses that describes it (e.g swimming in a pool; recess time; cooking dinner)

3. Memory Bag

Lead a discussion about Shi-shi-etko's memory bag. Ask students:

- Why did she put different plants in her memory bag?
- What plants that grow in their neighbourhood could be put in their own memory bag?
- If possible, take the class for a walk in a park or wooded area to observe and record different types of plants growing in the area. It wouldn't be respectful to the land if the whole class gathered samples as Shi-shi-etko did. Instead, students can record the plants by taking digital photos or sketching them.
 - You may want to tie in the sensory imagery activity with this walk. Ask students to observe examples of the five senses.

4. Questions From Clues in the Book

Lead a discussion about what kind of school Shi-shi-etko is going to. Ask students, "What do we know about Shi-shi-etko's school from the story?"

- Have students work in pairs or small groups to create questions about the school Shi-shi-etko is going to.
- Share the questions with the whole class and write them on a chart to post in the classroom.

Rationale: Introduction to Residential School unit

Prescribed Learning Outcome(s): Government policies put into place throughout history, have affected Aboriginal people and still shape who they are today (Residential Schools 1831-1996).
 Indigenous languages are still spoken, sacred songs are still sung, and rituals are still performed.

Instructional Objective(s): Students who have fully met the prescribed learning outcomes are able to:

- Describe the impact of the Indian Act on Aboriginal people (e.g., marginalization and dependency)
- Describe the impact of residential schools on Aboriginal people (e.g., destruction of lives and communities)
- Identify various Aboriginal responses to challenges (e.g., negotiations, protests, and court cases with respect to land and resource issues; demand for self-government)
- Formulate answers to questions such as the following:
 - What are the challenges and benefits for Aboriginal people living on and off reserves?
 - Why are Aboriginal people concerned about cultural appropriation?

Teacher Preparation:

Understandings:	Essential Questions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws change Aboriginal lives. • Indian traditions are still taught to Indian children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to have a tradition? • How does one law change the lives of some Aboriginal families? • Do you know what your name means?

Lesson Activities:

Teacher Activities	Student Activities	Time
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retell the events in order of time during the four days before Shi-shi-etko left for school, naming the person and places they went. • Identify three things that you would miss from home, if you had to live away from home. Why you would miss them? • Tell how their parents might feel if a law said their child had to go to a school far away from home. • Create a bag of memories. What is in it and why is each thing in it special to you? • Learn what their name means (find out why their parents chose it?). 	<p>Students will know...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some laws keep families apart from each other while the children go to school. • Some families give children a traditional name, like Shi-shi-etko to honor their child. • All names are special and respected. • Respect traditions that are practiced by others. 	

Student activities

Performance Tasks:

1. Students and teacher will "write" a letter to Shi-shi-etko to tell her how they feel about the way she spent her four days before leaving home and how she may have felt the day she left home.
2. Students will order events in time during the four days before Shi-shi-etko left for home, naming the person(s) she spent the day with, the places they went and some sights and sounds she experienced.

Other Evidence:

Design and create a student-made classroom quilt for Shi-shi-etko to "send" to her with the letter they "write" (colored paper or fabric, possibly with family, plant and animal pictures using any geometric shape and pattern). This can be sent to the Aboriginal Education program for display.

Learn about the five senses and relate them to things in nature that were important to Shi-shi-etko and/or other familiar plant and animal life. Nature walks, study and collection of plant species, animal tracks, etc. can support this.

Invite a singer/drummer to your classroom to perform a traditional song for the class.

More Evidence:

Learning Activities: What learning experiences and instruction will enable students to achieve the desired results: This lesson on putting events in order focuses on a striking era of history for American Indians who were (and still are in some areas) required to leave home to attend residential (government boarding) schools. During the four days before Shi-shi-etko (the story character) leaves home, she gathers the honor and beauty of her family and home, both in her heart and memory as she prepares a small pouch (memory bag) which she takes with her. Sharing this moving story with young children and drawing on how they might feel to have to leave their home and family to go to school far away, will create a poignant sense of empathy both for students and staff, for American Indian children who have lived (and continue currently) to endure this loss. The teaching focus is on empathy for the story character and the joy she found each day – even with the challenge of having to leave her home and family. This lesson is part of one of the major federal policy periods – The Boarding School Period, from 1879 to present (the historical information is support for the teacher).

Resources

Campbell, Nicola I. (Interior Salish, Canadian Cree, Métis). Shi-shi-etko. Illustrated by Kim LaFave. Berkely, Calif: Groundwood Books, 2005. 28 pp. ISBN: 0-88899-659-4