

## A COYOTE SOLSTICE TALE Picture Book Lesson

Created by Peter Le, 2020 Werklund Graduate

Peter Le is a K-12 Mathematics teacher passionate about contextualized, relevant, and meaningful learning experiences for all students through multiple forms of teaching. He has worked across various fields and disciplines including Sciences, Technology, and ELL, with diverse demographics. Recently, Peter has worked through a Two-Eyed Seeing approach with Indigenous communities, mentors, and elders, in coordinating and planning events, workshops, and STEAM activities in robotics over the summer.

Resource	<p>A COYOTE SOLSTICE TALE Written by Thomas King and illustrated by Gary Clement A picture book</p>
Book Description	<p>Coyote is having friends over for a little solstice party in the woods when a little girl comes by unexpectedly. She leads the friends through the snowy woods to the mall -- a place they had never seen before. The trickster goes crazy with glee as he shops with abandon, only to discover that filling a shopping cart with goodies is not quite the same thing as actually paying for them.</p>
Author/creator and/or literature background	<p>Author: Thomas King</p> <p>King has written several highly acclaimed children's books, including <i>A Coyote Columbus Story</i>, illustrated by William Kent Monkman, which was a Governor General's Literary Award finalist. King, who is of Cherokee and Greek descent, was a Professor of English at the University of Guelph for many years, where he taught Native Literature and Creative Writing. He won the RBC Taylor Prize and the British Columbia National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction for <i>The Inconvenient Indian</i>, and the Governor General's Literary Award for his adult novel, <i>The Back of the Turtle</i>.</p> <p>Illustrator: Gary Clement</p> <p>Gary Clement is an award-winning author and illustrator. He has won the Governor General's Literary Award (Illustration) for <i>The Great Poochini</i> and was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award (Illustration) for <i>Just Stay Put</i>, and <i>Oy, Feh, So?</i> by Cary Fagan. He is the editorial cartoonist for the <i>National Post</i>, and his work has appeared in the <i>New York Times</i> and the <i>Wall Street Journal</i>. Gary lives in Toronto where he regularly exhibits his drawings and paintings.</p>
UPE course connections	<p>Educ 551 - This lesson is a good example of building social, and emotional wellness within young students by exploring key moral concepts from the Seven Teachings or the Circle of Courage. This story highlights the importance of relationships with the community, the self, nature/environment, and others. The story also shares the significance of togetherness and expressing gratitude for the gifts we receive from the Earth. This story can also be used as a lesson to challenge consumer culture.</p>

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	<p>Educ 450 – This text can provide pre-service teachers a simple way of exposing students to moral teachings of different cultures, and the diversity we all embrace and share. It can help students appreciate and demonstrate sensitivity towards individual and cultural differences. This text helps students highlight and recognize the importance of relationships with the community, the self, nature/environment, and others. The story also shares the significance of togetherness and expressing gratitude for the gifts we receive from the Earth. This story can also be used as a lesson to challenge consumer culture. Lastly, pre-service teachers can formulate strategies for incorporating a respect for diversity.</p> <p>Educ 435 - This text is a good example of diversity in literature, exploring the concept of the trickster in Indigenous storytelling and its role in meaning making and the lessons to be taught. This text also highlights the importance of the Seven Sacred Teachings that have great significance across various groups and the oral stories/language that have been passed down, preserved and although different across various Indigenous groups, all have the same message.</p>
K-12 connection	<p>This text has connections to English, Social Studies, Science, Art, and Music.</p> <p>Grades 1 - 5 English/Social Studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.2 Moving Forward with the Past: My Family, My History and My Community</li><li>2.2 A Community in the Past</li><li>3.1 Communities in the World</li><li>3.2 Global Citizenship</li><li>4.1 Alberta: A Sense of the Land</li><li>4.2 The Stories, Histories and People of Alberta</li><li>4.3 Alberta: Celebrations and Challenges</li><li>5.2 Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada</li></ul> <p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1–4 and 2-4 Demonstrate positive attitudes for the study of science and for the application of science in responsible ways.</li><li>2–5 Describe some properties of water and other liquids, and recognize the importance of water to living and nonliving things.</li></ul>

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	<p>Introduction to key moral concepts from the Seven Teachings or the Circle of Courage. This story highlights the importance of relationships with the community, the self, nature/environment, and others. The story also shares the significance of togetherness and expressing gratitude for the gifts we receive from the Earth. This story can also be used as a lesson to challenge consumer culture.</p>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A COYOTE SOLSTICE TALE (physical copy or ebook or read-along video)</li><li>● Printed pictures from the story to post around the class</li><li>● A journal/agenda</li></ul>
Lesson Activities	<p>Ideally during the first week of the start of the semester-classroom routines/conduct were established together with students with guidance from the Circle of Courage or the Seven Teachings. This lesson could be built from previous talks about the Seven Teachings or the Circle of Courage. The Circle of Courage or the Seven Teachings could be big overarching themes that the classroom can focus around throughout each week throughout the year.</p> <p>Alternatively, it can also be a first introduction to these ideas. 1. Introduce/Remind of the Seven Teachings:</p> <p>Let students know: Before early settlers arrived in what is Canada today, there were already many Indigenous peoples living here. Each of these groups had unique beliefs. These beliefs are often passed down orally from generation on to generation through traditional teachings by Elders. The Elders have used their experience and wisdom to help people in their communities make good decisions. Many Indigenous communities have adopted 7 guiding principles/ideas, in one form or another, as a moral guide. Each group/community has adapted the teachings to suit their community values. Despite where the teachings may have originated, they all share the same concepts of abiding by a moral respect for all:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Respect</li><li>● Truth</li><li>● Humility</li><li>● Honesty</li><li>● Love</li></ul>

- Wisdom
- Bravery

If this is the first time talking about either The Seven Teaching or the Circle of Courage, feel free to go more in depth prior to this lesson.

The Seven Sacred Teachings is a group of teachings that originated with the Anishnaabe of North America. The teachings are guidelines to live by and consider in every aspect of a person's life.

Please see the following for more information:

<https://everystudentcanthrive.weebly.com/circle-of-courage.html>  
[https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/gr9\\_found/courage\\_poster.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/gr9_found/courage_poster.pdf)  
<http://empoweringthespirit.ca/cultures-of-belonging/seven-grandfathers-teachings/>  
<http://ojibwe.net/projects/prayers-teachings/the-gifts-of-the-seven-grandfathers/>  
<https://www.southernnetwork.org/site/seven-teachings>

2. Activate student thinking by discussing: What are characteristics needed to build healthy relationships? Have students brainstorm their thinking in small groups, and then share with the class. Ask students to link these characteristics to the Seven Teachings.
3. Post Pictures of the story around the room in order and number each picture so students can discuss them in chronological order according to the story. Have students engage in a storywalk- students walk around the room and infer what the story could be about. After, gather, and share ideas together as a class.
4. Read the story together as a class.
5. Discuss any questions students pose.

Potential discussion questions to have in small groups or as a class (depending on grade/class dynamic) :

- What do you think the girl meant when she said, "I've come to the woods to find friendship and goodwill and peace"?
- Consider the image of Coyote dreaming of buying goodwill and peace. What is goodwill and peace? Do you think this is something that can be purchased? How do you find goodwill and peace?
- Consider the quote "Good grief," said Coyote quite shaken for he

knew as everyone knows that people and creatures stopped talking a couple of eons ago.” Thinking about relationships Indigenous people have with the land and animals, what do you think Coyote is referring to?

- Discuss how Coyote and his friends demonstrate the Seven Teachings in how they welcome and help the young girl who visits. Have students find specific examples from the story and connect them to a Teaching. There may be more than one teaching in the examples.
- When they return to Coyote's house the girl explains that she decided to be a reindeer to live in a more generous world where everyone knows how to share. Ask students what everyday sharing, and generosity could look like (i.e. on the playground, in the class, etc.). Could link themes in "Twas the night before Christmas," however, this story is also a contemporary take on the trickster tale form, where a trickster character learns a lesson by experience. I.e. Coyote is seduced by consumer culture, but quickly realizes it's not all that great. Brainstorm with students gift alternatives that are not materialist/challenge consumer culture and have a discussion about materialism and alternative expressions of care/appreciation towards loved ones. I.e. spending time with someone, acts of kindness, making their favorite food item, card, homemade gifts, etc.
- Science idea-Consider the quote:

“Everybody went out into the cold  
To sing as the light filled the heavens  
To welcome a splendid new day  
And offer a prayer for clean water and air  
Then they parted, and went their own way.”

Does everyone have access to clean water? Give some examples of actions that have been taken to protect water. What action(s) can you take to protect the water?

6. After one or more of the topics above have been discussed, have students bring one of the ideas above to life by writing in their journal/agenda/learning log an actionable goal they will take on. Try to help students create these goals using the S.M.A.R.T. goals framework. Give an example of such a goal.  
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm> Students can share with the class by the end of the week the progress on their one goal.

Extensions:

- As a class, talk about how lessons from traditional stories can be expressed in contemporary life, and how the 'trickster' (in this story it is the Coyote) form could be used to comment on and express lessons about contemporary life. Students could write their own modern day trickster tale in which a trickster figure in modern life learns a lesson about modern life through experience.
- Art Activity - Discuss the seven sacred teachings with the students, and explain that each teaching has an animal that shows, or teaches, that teaching. Ask students to choose one of the Seven Teachings and ask which animal they think is associated with the teaching. Have students draw the animal that symbolizes the character or spirit of the teaching (in the Cree tradition- see below). Have students provide some personal examples. Have students create a mini-poster of their animal and the Teaching. Students should leave room at the bottom of their painting/drawing for the name of the Teaching and a brief description of why/how they feel the animal exemplifies that Teaching. Afterwards, the class can explore the animals each culture associates with the Seven Teachings and compare.
  - Bravery – Bear
  - Love – Eagle
  - Honesty – Sabe (Sasquatch or Big Foot)\*
  - Humility – Wolf
  - Wisdom – Beaver
  - Respect – Buffalo
  - Truth – Turtle

\*The Seven Sacred Teachings originated with the Ojibway. Sabe is an Ojibway word that translates to Sasquatch or Big Foot in English. There is no specific word in Cree for this animal.

- Music/Art class - Project of Heart: <http://projectofheart.ca/>
- English - have students create a story map. Looking at the setting, foreshadowing, themes, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, etc. This can be tailored to the grade. I.e. explore the beginning, middle, end, problem, and solution. Here, students are encouraged to explore the important elements of any fiction text to support comprehension

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