

Secret Path 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.

Exploring the Polyphonic story of The Secret Path

Resource	<p>Secret Path</p> <p>Multimedia work/concept album- Gord Downie's album and Jeff Lemire's Graphic Novel</p> <p>Polyphonic Resource:</p> <p>Interdisciplinary project- may require collaboration between art, english, and social studies. Could include music and drama as well.</p>
Book Description	<p>The Secret Path is an animated film adaptation of Gord Downie's album and Jeff Lemire's textless graphic novel. Working with Downie's poetry and music, Lemire has created a powerful visual representation of the life of Chanie Wenjack- a young Indigenous boy's journey trying to return home escaping from a residential school.</p>
Author/creator and/or literature background	<p>Gord Downie has taken Wenjack's story and turned it into the <i>Secret Path</i> project, which consists of a solo album, a graphic novel and an animated film. The intention for Downie was to draw attention to Wenjack's story and the legacy of residential schools.</p>

<p>UPE course connections (not exhaustive)</p>	<p>Educ 435- These texts explore various forms of literacies and different ways on how students can utilize texts: how they encode and decode, make meaning and critically engage with a wide variety of texts and extract/create/ interpret their meaning. Extended versions of this lesson can result in students exploring/ creating their own polyphonic text and various forms of diversity for texts and work in the classroom. This text is a good example of diversity in literature, exploring symbolism in Indigenous cultures.</p> <p>Educ 445 – These resources fit well into examining various approaches for adapting classroom resources, instruction, and environments to meet the needs of diverse learners, while also focusing on identity, culture, and language. This text provides multiple angles to approach on topic and explores concepts that are relevant and meaningful to students i.e. one’s identity and culture.</p> <p>Educ 450 – These texts provide strong meaning and connections to Indigenous ways of learning (oral, symbolic/pictorial), and explores the history of residential schools and its consequences, leading to inter-generational trauma through vivid and personal accounts. Its polyphonic nature models the Indigenous idea that there is no correct way for a story to be told, how time is not linear, and storytelling is connected to land. These concepts support the course learning goals of social inequalities in Canada, social justice education, evaluating the implications of action/inaction, privilege, and various forms of oppression, among many others.</p> <p>Educ 546 – A great example of how design-based thinking principles/processes can be applied to diversify text and their learning approaches. I.e. through creative lyrical, graphical, and audio approaches opposed to more traditional methods. The optional activities below show various ideas which have been produced from the design process</p> <p>Educ 456 - The extensions of this lesson demonstrate various meaningful, relevant and contextualized ways to assess student learning beyond just exams, essays, and tests. The various extensions show how holistic learning and assessment can be, further reflecting the various Indigenous ways of learning/knowing.</p>
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	<p>Educ 520 - This lesson is a good example of a small or large scale interdisciplinary project for the school. Please see the activities below to incorporate Social studies, ELA, Art, Drama, Band/Music, etc. The interdisciplinary projects can easily involve clubs like social justice, choir, and many more.</p>
K-12 connection	<p>Grades 7 -9</p> <p>Related curricular outcomes: Social Studies, ELA, and Art: responding to texts, discussion, cultural understanding, concepts in social justice and social inequalities in Canada, analysis of texts/stories/music. Exploring sense of self: loss of identity, culture, language. Exploring multimodal forms and their effect on how we take in a story. Exploring how to make meaning from various aspects of art (shading, use of /lack of use of colour, framing, composition, how characters are drawn, use of lines, etc.</p> <p>Key words: talents, unique, pronunciation, Inuktitut, Inuit culture</p>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Audio version of Secret Path https://secretpath.ca/- Graphic Novel version of Secret Path- Large paper/whiteboard spaces around the room- Whiteboard markers for each student
Rationale	<p><u>Big Idea:</u></p> <p>Raise awareness, empathy, and understanding surrounding the dark legacy of Canada's residential school systems and their impacts on Indigenous youth and their families, building on the recommendations of the TRC and what students can do in the present and future. Use these resources to highlight various Indigenous ways of understanding, symbolism, culture, and storytelling (the concept of the trickster figure in Indigenous text - in this text it is the raven).</p> <p>The Secret Path also showcases student resistance in residential schools and instills a sense of agency which unsettles traditional views of Indigenous peoples as merely victims.</p>

<p>Lesson/activities</p>	<p>The Secret Path Analysis</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Pictorial:</i> Divide the class into small groups(3-4 per group), each group will be assigned a story from the graphic novel (more than one group can be assigned the same story). Each student explores their story individually within their group, makes notes about what they are feeling, thoughts and ideas that come up, then discusses with their group members. <p>This is a great opportunity to encourage students to analyze their story using previously learnt content in ELA (i.e. elements of a graphic novel/visual text, main ideas, plot, theme, writing style, etc.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <i>Written:</i> Each student will then read the lyrics of their particular story, make notes on their thoughts and feelings, then discuss meaning with their group members. Alternatively- students can be given unsorted lyrics of the various songs in the book and will have to match the lyrics to particular stories within the book. Or students can write lyrics/ written pieces that reflect what they understand from the graphical story, then compare to the lyrics by Gord Downie. 3. <i>Auditorial:</i> Each student will then listen to the lyrics of their particular story, make notes on their thoughts and feelings, then discuss meaning with their group members. <p>**Note that the order of 1,2 , and 3, could be reversed, i.e. students could read the lyrics first and create visual representations of it.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <i>Visual:</i> Each group will then watch their story on (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGd764YU9yc) and then reflect on the questions below and formulate how they want to share their response (words, drawing, etc- based on their thoughts/feelings), and how does it affect their interpretation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What stories are being told by the music vs. the lyrics vs. the images vs. animation? Why is the story told in this polyphonic way (graphic novel, lyrics, animated, song, etc)? ❖ What is the relationship between text and image? Do words and images convey the same
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information/message? Expand the message?
Contradict the message?

- ❖ With your assigned song- What feelings are evoked? Do the sounds and music evoke different feelings than the lyrics? The images? Everything together?
- ❖ How does listening, watching, reading your chosen song change according to the codes, styles, and textual devices that communicate meaning?
- ❖ Which images/words stood out for you and why?
- ❖ What questions do you have?

Optional questions- pick and choose depending on class and grade:

- ❖ What perspective (point of view) does the reader have on the story?
- ❖ How is colour being used in the images? Are the colours bright? Muted? Contrasting? Complimentary? What about the shade and saturation? What are the effects of the illustrator's colour choices?
- ❖ How are the characters drawn? Are they realistic, iconic, or somewhere in between? Are shapes and lines round, soft, angular, incomplete, stable, etc...? How does this affect the story and your interpretation?
- ❖ How are framing and composition used? What is kept in focus, and what must we imagine? What has the most "visual weight"? How does the image invite us to interpret the relationship between the objects and characters that are being represented?
- ❖ When you read the book aloud v.s listening to it, v.s. reading it in your head, what is the effect of how language is structured? Are the sentences long? Short? Rhythmic? Uneven? How do sentences flow between lyrics? How do these affect the message of the story?

4. Following a discussion protocol (recommended Chalk Talk – Students silently write/draw their responses to the above questions/ excerpts posted around the room, including posing questions or responding to other students). Various other

	<p>discussion protocols may be used as well https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Students will then discuss the questions within their groups. Teacher will then lead a class discussion based on students' responses from Chalk Talk, ensuring that all groups present to the class a summary of their story- ideas, thoughts, and feelings talked about- ensuring the whole class understands the other parts of The Secret Path. Teacher will then go to each of the questions posted around the room and facilitate a class discussion. Ensure to debrief and provide warnings as some of the content may be triggering for some students.6. (If possible) Contact TRCM to have a speaker/Elder/Survivor, come in to follow up with the discussions7. Depending on whether it is an English, Art or Social studies class pick an activity:<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Writing a letter to local MLA about a current Indigenous issue within the city/province in which students would research, and conduct interviews, etc to start the dialogue and initiate change.● Create an art piece personifying feelings, ideas, concepts from the text, personal ideas/thoughts on reconciliation, or about something special about them and how they would feel if that was taken away to create awareness.● Create a narrative/song/writing piece/artwork (potentially a paper bag mask- as in the story) about identity● Recreate a scene/ lyrical part using the artist's style (ink and watercolor) to convey students' interpretation/feelings of the scene, or a personal event. Challenge students to play with concepts regarding text and image and what they want the viewer to perceive.● Students can explore Gord Downie's struggle with producing this work and the
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	<p>various interviews - https://www.cbc.ca/arts/secretpath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students can also stage an original production/play that is a tribute to this art work through collaboration with the drama, and music classes. See link for example: https://gem.cbc.ca/media/short-docs/season-1/episode-41/38e815a-00cd97f1490

Supporting Sources:

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