

Disrupting the Colonizer's Space: An Exploration of Identity with Jordan Abel's *Injun*

Resources used and possible concerns	Long poem: <i>Injun</i> by Jordan Abel
Author/creator and/or literature background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jordan Abel – a Nisga'a poet that studied at the University of British Columbia and is currently pursuing a PhD at Simon Fraser University. His research “concentrates on the intersection between digital humanities and Indigenous literary studies” (Abel, 2016). - Part of the Nisga'a nation, of which more information can be found here: https://www.nisgaanation.ca/ - Abel won the Griffin Poetry Prize in 2016 for <i>Injun</i> - <i>Injun</i> is “a conceptual work that is the poetic result of searching through a particular archive for the word “injun” (Neilson) - Abel created <i>Injun</i> by searching the word ‘injun’ within many different Western novels found on the public domain through Project Gutenberg
UPE course connections (not exhaustive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education 435 – Literacy, Language and Culture: teachers will have the opportunity to view and analyze the structure of <i>Injun</i> and how it disrupts the colonizer settler narrative in the literary space. The resource ensures that readers learn to understand how powerful language can be when it is used in certain ways, which in turn will inform teachers on language development and linguistic diversity in their learning environments. - Education 520 – Diversity in Learning: With the accessibility of the text, <i>Injun</i>, on a surface level, brings together English Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts, but upon closer inspection, also features Mathematics (algorithms used to find the term ‘injun’, visual typography). With greater care, teachers may look at this resource from many different disciplines, thus relating back to interdisciplinary education. - Education 530 – Indigenous Education: The perspectives of Indigenous peoples come together in Jordan Abel's <i>Injun</i>, especially since he is disrupting the colonizer narrative and reclaiming the space. The connection to Education 530 relates to the importance

	<p>of oral traditions in various Indigenous cultures but also the act of claiming a literary narrative space that has largely been unoccupied by Indigenous authors up until the 21st century. Because of the way that Abel arranges his poem, “the core of the English language which, in residential schools, violently silenced traditional Indigenous languages” (McDougall, 2019). This serves as a powerful reclamation of language and narrative space through the perspective of an Indigenous individual and would provide an invaluable learning experience for teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education 556 – Professional Learning: the activity will work as a good exercise for teachers of all disciplines to learn and discuss Indigenous ways of knowing & learning, how Indigenous peoples have been/are being treated in society, etc. Teachers can then use this learning experience to transfer their knowledge, understanding, and empathy to their classrooms.
K-12 connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly recommended for grade 12 English Language Arts, as the project deals with mature themes and language - Related curricular outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social studies (history of the land and people, collaboration with peers, researching skills, appreciation of diversity and worldviews) - English Language Arts (creativity using different media, comprehension, artistry of communication through multimedia)
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Available copies of <i>Injun</i> by Jordan Abel - Open domain literature found on Project Gutenberg - Free sound-mixing software (Audacity is recommended) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Here is a tutorial for Audacity: https://youtu.be/WWFvG1-AmNk - Microsoft Word or any other software for typing - List of spoken word & slam poetry for students to access and take inspiration from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spotify playlist featuring spoken word: “spoken word, poetry, etc.” curated by Shona Oliver - “When a Boy Tells You, He Loves You” by Edwin Bodney: https://youtu.be/sq1l-19pwS4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “To This Day” by Shane Koyczan: https://youtu.be/ltun92DfnPY - “OCD” by Neil Hilborn: https://youtu.be/vnKZ4pdSU-s - “When Love Arrives” by Sarah Kay & Phil Kaye: https://youtu.be/cPG6nJRJeWQ - “cuz he’s black” by Javon Johnson: https://youtu.be/u9Wf8y_5Yn4 - “Healing” by Nayo Jones: https://youtu.be/8YzIGoonlrE - “Ten Responses to the Phrase ‘Man Up’” by Guante: https://youtu.be/QFoBaTkPgco
Rationale	<p>Big idea: To use language in such a way that it allows students to reclaim their identity by using their voice. Recommended to be part of a poetry unit or to be the final project for students to synthesize their learning.</p> <p>Purpose: To use Jordan Abel’s <i>Injun</i> and begin reflecting on the power of the narrative space that has so long been occupied by colonizer settler narrative and analyzing Abel’s disruption of it by reclaiming Indigenous identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The precedence of Western novels has time and again led to narratives “violently displacing and superseding Indigenous storytelling in the process” (McDougall, 2019), and <i>Injun</i> resists the displacing of Indigenous narrative. This is like the overarching narratives that other marginalised identities must deal with and allowing students to use their own words and voice will help disrupt the ‘stronger’ narrative. - For students to record and remix their words and voices, “[the] orality constitutes an approach to resistance that uses Indigenous ways of storytelling and knowing” (McDougall, 2019) - Ultimately, once students share their work with their peers, they will come to understand that “sharing stories orally is done in the context of living, dynamic peoplehood,” (McDougall, 2019), a tradition that many Indigenous cultures thrive upon.
Lesson/activities	To preface the main activity, the teacher should lead a lesson or activity that allows students to learn more about the Nisga’a

nation at the following link: <https://www.nisgaanation.ca/>. This should be done before proceeding with the main activity so that students understand Jordan Abel's background before analyzing his poetry.

Hook: Students will be divided accordingly, and each group will receive a selected poem, whether in disjointed, explosive text or in traditional verse, from Abel's *Injun*. They will create a mind map to organize their thoughts and findings on the poem. Students will then share thoughts with the rest of the class and discuss each poem's significance and connection with the rest of the long poem.

1. Teacher will lead a mini lesson on Abel's creative process and his intentions in creating this text. The teacher may also refresh students on the history of colonization in Canada and the relationship between colonizer settlers and Indigenous peoples.
2. The teacher will facilitate a class discussion on the power of language and how it can be used to define peoples' identities. To facilitate this conversation, the teacher will present any of the following questions for students to reflect on and answer:
 - a. "How is my identity shaped by my experiences?"
 - b. "Does my identity affect the way I/others treat others/me?"
 - c. "Are our identities influenced by how others view us?"
 - d. "Do our identities determine where we belong?"
3. Students will follow a similar method to what Abel did by searching through Project Gutenberg for literature that feature certain phrases and create poetry using what they have gathered and to reflect the reclamation of their identities or a specific analysis of where they are coming from as individuals
 - a. Students will be encouraged to look at ethnic, sexual, religious, cultural, gender, or social identities
4. Teacher will rotate writers' workshop with students to ensure that they receive constructive feedback and encouragement on their writing
5. Teacher should provide a mini lesson on the numerous features of Audacity or provide a YouTube tutorial for students

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Once satisfied with their poems, students will record themselves reciting their poem into the corresponding software (Audacity).7. Students will mix their recordings to their liking (using different tones, pitches, appropriate sound clips, etc.) using the software provided8. After completion of their recording, students will write a narrative explaining why their piece sounds the way it does (i.e. explain their use of certain tones, pitches, remixes, additional sound clips, etc.) and the significance of their choices. This is to demonstrate the reclamation of their identities using their own words and voice.9. After completion, there will be a day dedicated to students showcasing their work in a safe and respectful environment.
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Supporting Sources (APA):

McDougall, A. C. (2019). The Decolonization of Print, Digital, and Oral Spaces in Jordan Abel's *Injun*. *Canadian Literature*, (239), 87-104. Retrieved July 10, 2020.

Abel, J. (2016) *Injun*. Vancouver: Talonbooks.

Justice, D. H. (2018). *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Neilson, S. (n.d.). Lengthening the Short Street by Shane Neilson. Retrieved July 16, 2020, from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/144803/lengthening-the-short-street>

Regan, P. (2011) *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.