

Resource	Missing Nimâmâ (Picture Book) by Melanie Florence and François Thisdale
Product	Teaching Guide for Secondary classroom use including introduction, summary, close reading questions, classroom activities, etc
UPE Course Connections	
EDUC 435: Literacy, Language and Culture	The Teaching Guide explores how Secondary teachers can use picture books to help engage hesitant readers and English language learners. This includes the benefits of reading picture books in improving student visual literacy and close reading skills.
EDUC 460: Specialization I	This would be an appropriate resource for students in the Social Studies or English Language Arts specialization. Introducing them to a variety of Indigenous literature, including picture books, is important as they begin their focus in their teachable subject area.
EDUC 530: Indigenous Education	Students would benefit from reviewing Missing Nimâmâ and other Indigenous picture books in their exploration of Indigenous classroom resources. This teaching guide can help pre-service teachers see the potential for picture books to help students engage in conversations about Canada's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Suggested Themes	Indigenous Identity, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
K-12 Connections	Recommended age range: Grades 11-12 Subjects: English Language Arts and Social Studies  Curricular Outcomes: Respond to a variety of texts, Visual literacy, Respect others and strengthen community, Justice and conflict resolution, Indigenous perspective and experiences, Identity and Family.

# Missing Nimâmâ

## Guide for Secondary Classroom Use



Figure 1. Cover of *Missing Nimâmâ* by M. Florence, 2015, Clockwise Press.

## Introduction

This picture book about a young Indigenous girl growing up separated from her mother is written by Melanie Florence and inspired by the true story of the hundreds of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) of Canada. It is illustrated by François Thisdale. The book won the *TD Canadian Children's Literature Award* in 2016. This teaching guide is specifically for use in secondary classrooms.

## Summary

Kateri is a young girl, growing up in the care of her grandmother. We see her reaching important milestones— her first day of school, first dance, first date, wedding, first child— along with her mother, who is always there, watching her child growing up without her.

Told in alternating voices, *Missing Nimâmâ* is a story of love, loss and acceptance, showing the human side of a national tragedy. An afterword by the author provides a simple, age-appropriate context for young readers. (*From Clockwise Press*)

## About the Author

Melanie Florence is a writer of Cree and Scottish heritage based in Toronto. Her childhood relationship with her grandfather sparked her interest in writing about Indigenous themes and characters. She writes both fiction and non-fiction books for young readers. Her writing has won multiple awards.

## About the Illustrator

François Thisdale is the award-winning illustrator of several picture books. His work blends traditional drawing and painting with digital images, using collage, acrylic, watercolour and computer. He also composes music.

## VIEWING AND REPRESENTING



*“Visual imagery is an integral part of contemporary life. By developing viewing strategies and skills, students come to understand the ways in which images may be used to convey ideas, values and beliefs. Critical viewing enables students to acquire and assess information, appreciate the experiences of others, and understand and evaluate others’ ideas and perspectives.” (Alberta Learning, 2003, Introduction)*

## Using Picture Books with Older Readers

Picture books allow us to teach higher-level skills while still providing an engaging experience for hesitant readers and English language learners (Jacobson, 2015). Many picture books are quite complex and can actually introduce students to new vocabulary. More than just pictures, more than just words, picture books require students to read both and then synthesize the information to gain a full understanding of the text.

Authors of picture books write about complex and challenging topics in a way that is accessible to all readers. Indigenous writers are exploring many important aspects of Indigenous identity, culture and experiences in picture books. These books are an excellent way to invite Indigenous perspectives into the classroom and combat Indigenous stereotypes.

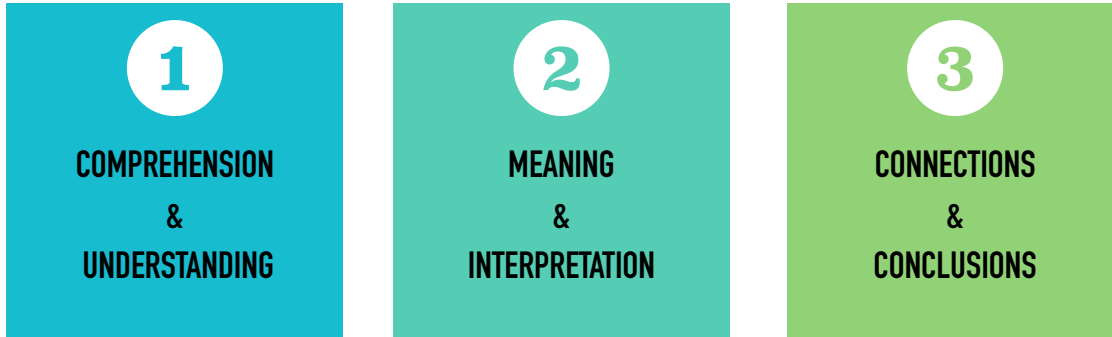
## MEDIA AND OTHER LINKS

Check out these videos and interviews with the author!

- Meet the Author: Melanie Florence: [Click Here](#)
- Q&A with Melanie Florence: [Click Here](#)
- Melanie Florence on “Missing Nimâmâ” (CBC Radio): [Click Here](#)

# Close Reading

Picture books are an excellent tool to help students practice and develop their close reading skills. Encourage students to read through the picture book multiple times and search for deeper levels of understanding on each consecutive reading.



## Level 1: Comprehension and Understanding

Here students are making initial observations about the text and gaining a surface understanding of what's happening on the page. Help guide students by asking questions such as:

- What is happening in this story?
- Who are the two narrators?
- What materials does the artist use?
- What patterns do you see? What images, colours, and symbols do you see repeated?
- Describe the artist's use of space. Do images appear in the background or foreground? Do they fill the whole page?
- What are some common ideas or events portrayed in his artwork? Do you recognize any familiar images?

## Level 2: Meaning and Interpretation

Here students begin with initial analysis to help make meaning out of and interpret the text. They might be helped by questions such as

- The book begins with a glossary of Cree terms and invites readers to watch for these Cree terms embedded in the artwork. What does the use of words in the writing and artwork add to the story?
- Butterflies are a repeated image throughout the story. What might these butterflies symbolize?
- What kind of mood does the artwork set and what kind of atmosphere is conveyed?

- Look for the sources of light in the images; fire, candles, lamps, windows etc... Where is the light in this story coming from?
- Pay attention to the faces in the artwork. Which faces are clear and which are obscured? Why?

### Level 3: Conclusions and Connections

Here students begin to draw conclusions about the text as a whole and make larger connections outside of the text. Have students discuss together to answer questions such as

- Do the words and art work together?
- Why does the author decide to finish the book with this afterward?
- What is the central idea or message of the story?
- Who do you think is the intended audience of *Missing Nimâmâ*? What might Florence want them to do with the knowledge and perspective shared in this story?

## Companion Texts

Picture books make great companion texts. Pair your study of *Missing Nimâmâ* with other texts and have your students look for connecting themes, symbols and ideas.

The legacy of Canada's MMIWG is difficult and complex. No single story could capture the experience or the entirety of emotion one goes through losing a loved one in this way. Help your students examine how the perspective found in *Missing Nimâmâ* compares to the expressions of other artists on the same topic.

### Possible paired texts:

- "mihkokwaniy" by Joshua Whitehead ([Poem](#))
- "Red Dress" by Amanda Rheame ([Music Video](#))
- Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story by David A. Robertson and Scott B. Henderson ([Graphic Novel](#))



# Classroom Activities

## Non-Fiction Activity

Review the “Calls for Justice” in the [Final Report](#) of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Have your students pay special attention to the “Calls for Justice for All Canadians”. Then ask your students to work together to write their own “Call for Justice” they would add to the list. Invite your students to come up with a personal plan for implementing and supporting these calls in their lives.

## Research Activity

(adapted from *Their voices will guide us: student and youth engagement guide*)

Have students select a specific case of a murdered or missing Indigenous woman or girl and research all of the available information including what they see in news releases, social media, etc.

Have each student ‘rewrite’ a news article about the case from a culturally safe viewpoint.

## Creative Activity

Missing Nimâmâ and other stories of MMIWG are sure to invoke complicated emotional responses in your students. Help them process these emotions and encourage them to give voice to their feelings through the creation of a creative piece such as a Journal Entry, Poem, Song, Monologue, Word Cloud, Video, Digital Art, Painting, etc.

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**“My heart aches for her. My beautiful girl”**

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