

The Seven Teachings Lesson Plans

Created by Claudia Gomez, 2020 Werklund Graduate

Born and raised in Venezuela, Claudia is now teaching in Calgary, Alberta. A fan of arts and multimedia, she opts for holistic, multiliterate approaches to teaching and learning. Outside of the classroom, she spends her time reading new books, reflecting in nature, and practicing yoga.

Resources used and possible concerns	<p>Picture book series: Seven Teachings Stories by Katherena Vermette</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Just Right Gift - A Story of Love• What is Truth, Betsy? - A Story of Truth• Amik Loves School - A Story of Wisdom• Singing Sisters - A Story of Humility• Kode's Quest(ion) - A Story of Respect• The First Day - A Story of Courage• Misaabe's Stories - A Story of Honesty
Author/creator and/or literature background	<p>Katherena Vermette is a Canadian writer of Métis descent, she is winner of the Governor General's Award for English-language poetry in 2013 for her collection North End Love Songs. In addition to writing, Vermette advocates for equality, and is vocal about her dissatisfaction with the apathy shown towards Indigenous issues by the Canadian government and the Canadian media.</p> <p>The Seven Teachings Stories are inspired by the Anishnaabe Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers—love, wisdom, humility, courage, respect, honesty, and truth. These stories depict Indigenous children in urban settings, telling familiar stories about home, school, and community.</p>
UPE course connections (not exhaustive)	<p>EDUC435 - Literacy, Language and Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• These lessons are centered around a book series, reading and responding to the various ideas presented, and making connections from the literature to the real world. This book series can be used to explore diversity in culture and literacy, and the lessons show how literature can guide classroom learning in various ways. <p>EDUC450</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One theme explored in Diversity in Learning, is inclusion and diversity in the classroom. Representing various cultures, gender identities, and backgrounds in classroom literature and learning is important. Through these lessons, Indigenous Ways of Knowing and culture are brought into the classroom, providing representation. <p>EDUC551</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This book series centers around the Seven Teachings, which promote good citizenship, and these stories model healthy relationship and communication skills for children. These ideas are important to comprehensive school health, encouraging children to develop empathy and mutual respect for one another, and these lessons can be used to help promote a healthy school environment.
K-12 connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target age range: Grades 3 to 6. This book series is suitable for all elementary grade levels, however, these lessons will focus on activities that are best suited for division two, as they involve student-led group work and several writing activities. • Subject - Language Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. ◦ Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. ◦ Manage ideas and information. ◦ Enhance the clarity and artistry of communication ◦ Respect, support and collaborate with others • Subject - Health and Life Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Wellness Choices: Students will make responsible and informed choices to maintain health and to promote safety for self and others. ◦ Relationship Choices: Students will develop effective interpersonal skills that demonstrate responsibility, respect and caring in order to establish and maintain healthy interactions.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Teachings Book Series • An item to pass around in a circle (a talking stick, rock, etc) • Art and writing supplies • Poster paper
Rationale	<p>Big Idea: Students will gain familiarity with Indigenous values and history through reading the seven stories and interacting with them in meaningful ways. These books will be used to create important dialogue and discussion, and sharing with classmates in order to promote understanding and empathy.</p> <p>Purpose: The Seven Grandfather Teachings center around morality and mutual respect for living things. Bringing these stories and activities into the classroom is an opportunity to promote kind and respectful behaviour at school, while bringing Indigenous Ways of Knowing into the curriculum. The activities listed here include classroom discussions and sharing circles, writing</p>

	activities, poster making, and creating skits, providing students with multiple literacies while exploring the Seven Teachings.
Lesson/activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Before reading each story, discuss the title, cover, and themes of each story. Share your predictions. Before reading Amik Loves School (which deals with the topic of residential schools) you should prepare students. After reading each story, ask the class some questions to review the story, its themes, and vocabulary. Here are some suggestions for review questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Just Right Gift <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What word does Migizi use to call her grandmother? What word do you use to call your grandmother? Amik Loves School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some of the differences between residential schools and our school? Can you think of why Moshoom did not like his teacher? Singing Sisters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why does Ma'iingan not want her sister to be singing? When does Ma'iingan show humility? The First Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why doesn't Makwa want to let go of his Mama? What helped Makwa feel more comfortable? Kode's Quest(ion) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at the picture before the last page. What are Kode and Betsy holding? How does this image relate to the teaching of respect? Misaabe's Stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does Misaabe hide how he really feels about reading? Why do you think he lied to his friends when talking about his dad? What is Truth, Betsy? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is <i>is</i> italicized in "Truth just <i>is</i>"? What does Miskwaadesi mean by saying that "we <i>are</i>"? Gather yourself and your students into a circle (if you aren't already), and pass around an item which will be the "talking stick". Encourage each student to share a personal connection to the story (a thought, idea, or a story that connects to the teaching), while others listen respectfully and reflect. For example, after reading The Just Right Gift, you may ask students to share about a time they wanted to

	<p>find the right gift for someone to show them love, or to share their favorite way to show someone they love them. Thank each student for sharing their connection.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Writer's workshop - this may take place directly after sharing in a circle, or at another point in the school day. Encourage students to write 1-2 page short stories of their own, using real life or imaginary characters, where the teaching of the day is learned or enacted. (Teacher may offer the option to draw a short storyboard or comic instead). 5. Presentations - after all seven stories have been read, this will be a fun way to review all the teachings. Sort students pairs or groups of 3, with each group being assigned one of the Seven Teachings. Groups will prepare a skit to act out a story that shows the rest of the class how this teaching can be applicable. Students may share their stories from the writer's workshop for ideas. Discuss how the teachings can be integrated into the presentation process, from planning and collaborating with team members to being a respectful audience member. 6. Explore some issues from the school community, or perhaps that students may experience in their day to day lives, and discuss as a class what teachings could help resolve this. You may draw examples of scenarios from the skits, but make sure you are using more than one teaching to address these issues. You could use a medicine wheel to organize this activity, by writing out the issue or scenario in the middle, and four different teachings and their connections to the issue around it in a circle. 7. Inspire students to get into their own groups, and create posters for the school. Each poster should focus on one teaching, and include both text and illustrations that relate the respective teaching.
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Sources:

Vermette, Katherena. (n.d.). About. Retrieved from <https://www.katherenavermette.com/about>