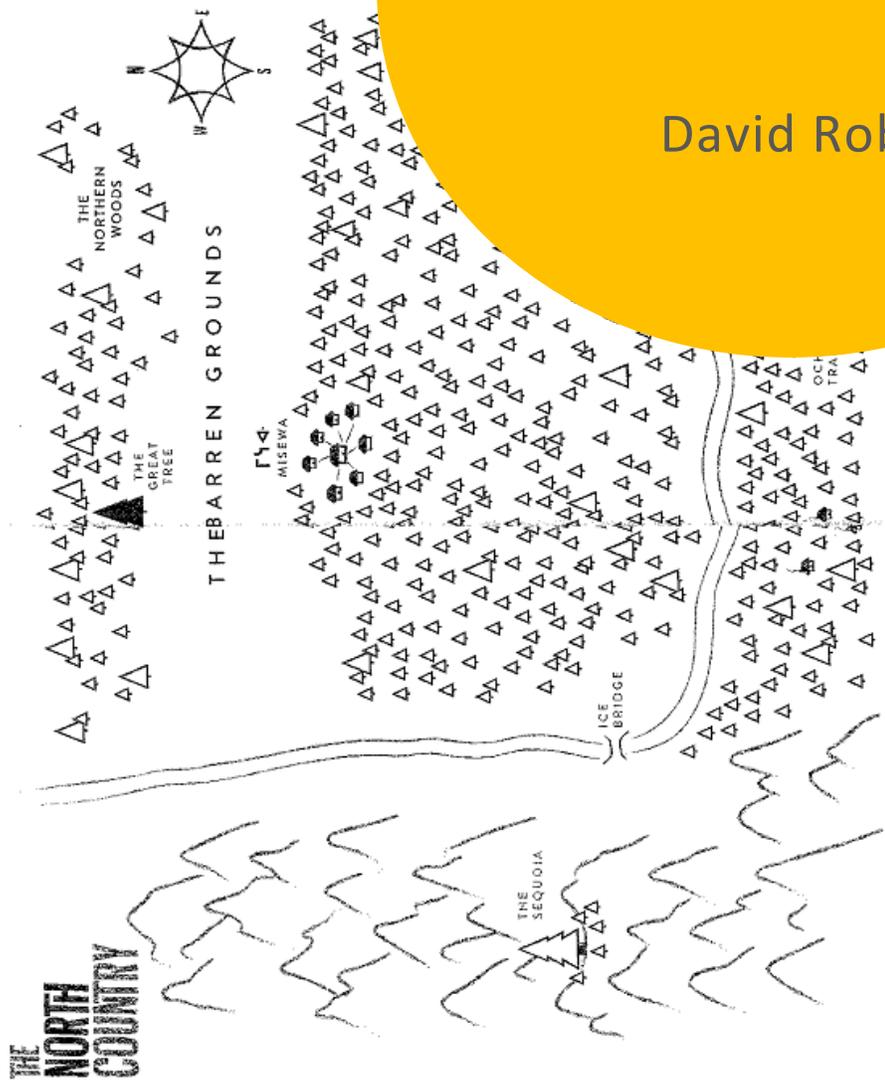


The Barren Grounds

David Robertson



SECTION 6: Identity
Pg 221 - 247

Section 6: Identity

Pg. 221- 247

Summary:

Arik, Morgan, and Eli travel back as a trio. They meet with The Council and determine its time to leave Misewa. Entering back into life in Winnipeg, Morgan and Eli are stronger and more confident in who they are.

Important background knowledge/ context for Teacher consideration:

David Robertson speaks about the agency of Morgan and Eli – as the heroes of their own story. Nobody ‘saves’ them, they ‘save’ themselves. This emphasis on strength, resilience and knowledge is an important part of the conclusion of this text. Reminder: this is the first of a series. The second book in the saga, The Great Bear comes out Sept 2021. Access [here](#)

FPPL

Learning requires the exploration of one’s identity.

Big Ideas:

Language and text can be a source of creativity and joy.

Exploring stories and texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.

Curricular Competency:

Recognize and appreciate the role of story, narrative, and oral tradition in expressing First Peoples perspectives, values, beliefs, and points of view.

Talking Circle

Prompts:

- Where did you find meaning?
- How is this story a guide?
- What education do we receive outside of school? Who teaches us?
- What does it mean to write from the heart not the head? Have you ever struggled to write what you really feel or mean? Have you ever struggled to SAY what you really feel or mean? Was it your heart that struggled, or your head?
- What do we receive from the land, or what do we get from the land?
- Why is connecting to the land so important?
- Why is feeling a sense of belonging so important?

Indigenous Worldview and Perspectives Focus

Note for teachers below are suggestions on ways to utilize the guide or strategies from previous aspects of this resource:

*Is there an activity that you want to revisit?

*Is there an activity that you did not get a chance to do, that would be a good fit?

*Is there an ongoing piece of learning that you have been working on that needs to be completed and celebrated?

Coming back to Beginning:

Is there a way to return to where you started as a class?

- This could be returning to the Ochek constellation story, returning to one of Wilfred Buck's quotes or returning to an activity that you did in the beginning that can be replicated.

Cover Prediction Activity:

Knowing that this is book one in a series- have students predict, creatively write or brainstorm what they think the next book will be about.

- instead of asking about the conflict or the problem in the book ask what they think the imbalance might be, or what aspect of Indigenous worldview could be explored further?

Project image of the front cover of the next book *The Great Bear* (comes out Sept 2021)

- Copy of the next cover is the appendix.

Have students individually record details or share orally what:

- they notice (*I see, I notice..*), predictions for the content (*I predict, I expect, I think, I hope...*) and; questions that they have (*I wonder, Why is...*)

Community:

In many Indigenous stories, there is not a single identifiable 'main character'. Indigenous author

Drew Hayden Taylor often discusses how in Indigenous stories, the community is the main character.

- What is a community?
- How would you describe the community or communities in this story?
- How was community the 'main character' of this text? Explain your answer.

Reflect on Journey:

Morgan's Journey:

What were Morgan's journeys?

How has she evolved as a person?

What new understandings does she have about herself?

Community Journey:

What is Misewa's journey?

What new understanding does the community have about itself?

Your Journey:

What has your journey been with this novel? What do you understand now that you didn't at the beginning of this novel? How will you continue this journey? What journey are you on?

You may choose to use the *CSI: Colour, Symbol, Image* graphic organizer for students to explore one of the journey's that are reflecting on. See strategy explanation [here](#)

Supplementary Text: Indigenous Worldview:

Opportunity to connect to 'What is the Most Beautiful Thing About Horses' by Richard Van Camp (Dogrib Nation). Can include another Indigenous perspective that connects to identity.

'What is the most beautiful thing you know about horses, and what is the most beautiful thing you know about you?' Van Camp- What is the Most Beautiful Thing About Horses

Literacy Focus

Annotate Poem:

Morgan writes a poem for her English class, take some time to interpret her words.

- Focus on the many meanings (could one line mean more than one thing?)
- Identify powerful phrases and key words.
- Illustrate the poem.
- Write your own poem (see suggestion below, or write their own poem about the Barren Grounds, or a character in the story, or a moment that resonates with them)

Copy of poem is in appendix.

Creative Identity Writing:

Encourage students to write an I am from poem:

Here is a link to a [template](#) form that helps generate a “rough” draft. Then have student refine this work.

Alternatively – have the student use the method suggested [here](#), where students make a list using all prompts and then pull their ideas together to make their poem.

Connect this to the Book – ‘*What is the Most Beautiful Thing About Horses*’ from the Indigenous Worldview and Perspectives section above.

Discussion Questions:

Resource: [The Barren Grounds- Educators Guide](#)

Why does connecting to and learning to live off the land become so important to Eli and eventually Morgan as well?

Identity and knowing who you are is something that Morgan struggles with throughout the novel.

- What kinds of things make up and impact your identity?
- What has disrupted Morgan’s sense of identity?
- How does this lack of identity affect how Morgan interacts in the world?

Creative Arts Learning

Coming to Theatres soon:

This activity is from the [The Barren Grounds- Educators Guide](#)

Imagine that The Barren Grounds is turned into a movie. In small groups, have students create movie posters that theaters would use to advertise. Who would the students choose (which actresses/actors) to play Morgan and Eli? What imagery and words/ phrases would they include on the poster to entice viewers without giving away the story? How would they honor the Cree culture within the movie and on the poster?

Map Art:

Take the map of The Barren Grounds and create representations over the map to portray how place is connected to memory. It may be helpful to enlarge on paper to make space for student thinking. Be mindful of colours, words, and symbols you could use to represent learning.

Favorite Scene:

Have students choose their favorite scene or most important scene in the novel. They are to draw/ colour/ represent that scene on one piece of paper. Encourage them to add as much detail and colour as possible to the scene they have chosen, for so long that it represents accurately the scene.

On a second piece of paper, have students “represent” via original artwork, the feeling/ emotion/ essence of that scene. Display the artworks side by side so that students can see how the emotions were interpreted by their classmates.

(If you have little time, ask students to make a “frame” for their important scene artwork. The “frame” should actually frame their artwork, and have the essence or emotions, etc. represented in it. It should give the “aura” of the scene.

BOOK TWO OF THE MISEWA SAGA

THE GREAT BEAR



DAVID A. ROBERTSON

Morgan's poem for Mrs. Edward's English class after her return from the Barren Grounds, pg 247

On the Barren Grounds

It took sinking under blinding white

To emerge another me

Somebody I forgot I was

Someone I could never see.

It took facing my worst fears

Stepping out into the night

To find that I was brave enough

Before I found the light.

It took me going far away

To feel this close to you

It took dreaming of a memory

To change what I thought I knew.

It took stars within the sky

To guide my way back home

That I'll always know the way

Wherever I might roam.

THE NORTH COUNTRY

