**Kit Title:** INDIGENOUS POETRY: WHAT’S THE THEME?

**What’s In the Kit:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Poetry Book** | **Perspective** | **Copies** | **SD35 SORA** |
| 77 Fragments of Familiar Ruin  | Cherokee | 5 | *E-book* |
| river woman  | Métis | 5 | *E-book* |
| Runaway Dreams  | Ojibway | 5 | *Audio and E-book* |
| A Really Good Brown Girl | Métis | 5 | *E-book* |
| Totem Poles and Railroads  | Mohawk | 3 | *-* |
| this is a small northern town  | Cree | 5 | *-* |







**Targeted Course Audience:**
- English First Peoples 10-12

**Curricular Competency Connections:**

**English First Peoples 10** [here](https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/english-language-arts/en_english-language-arts_10_efp-literary-studies_elab.pdf)

Content- Common themes in First Peoples texts

**English First Peoples 11** [here](https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/english-language-arts/en_english-language-arts_11_efp-literary-studies-and-writing_elab.pdf)

Content- Common themes in First Peoples texts

**English First Peoples 12** [here](https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/english-language-arts/en_english-language-arts_12_english-first-peoples.pdf)

Content- Common themes in First Peoples texts

**First Peoples Principle of Learning:**

Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.

**Teacher Planning and Considerations:**

The following quotes from *Chapter 10: Check the Tag on that ‘Indian’ Story: How to Find Authentic Indigenous Stories* can be found in Métis writer Chelsea Vowels acclaimed non-fiction text, *Indigenous Writes.* Whether for your own understanding or to be used with students, it prompts all readers of Indigenous literature to enter these texts with an open mind and the intention of putting in some work to build understanding.

**‘Indigenous stories come from a different cultural context than you may be familiar with.’**

**‘If you go into these stories always expecting to have your cultural beliefs and norms reinforced, you’re doing it wrong. Trite western moral lessons are not necessarily going to be handed to you in our stories.’**

**‘Sometimes what you are reading simply will not make sense to you because you lack the cultural context. That does not mean you should avoid these stories. It just means you may have to put a bit more work into getting the full benefit of them than you would with stories that come from a context you are already completely familiar with.’**

Chelsea Vowel (Metis) (pg 98)

Vowel, Chelsea. 2016. *Indigenous writes: a guide to First Nations, Métis & Inuit issues in Canada*.

Vowel’s to-the-point words add an additional reminder – we have responsibility as a reader to build context and understanding prior to reading in order achieve the full benefit of the story.

Some guiding questions to support the building of context prior to starting these poetry anthologies:

* **What do *you* need to learn, inquire, or read more about to get ready to teach these texts and support your students?**
* **How will you keep in mind Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in your class while introducing, reading, and working with these texts?**
* **What skills do your students need to be successful?**
	+ Support reading a poetry book?
	+ Support in collaborating and discussing books with peers?
	+ Other.
* **What knowledge do students need to be successful?**
	+ **Historical Context** – is there a universal topic/issue that you want to front load students with prior to poetry reading?
	+ **Cultural Context** – is there a protocol, concept, or teaching that you want provide students to support their engagement?
	+ **Trigger Warning** – how will you introduce the books with social considerations in mind, to support student interactions and create a safe learning environment?

**How to use these Resources:**

The following supports include two previewing and two resource engagement activities.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Meeting the Author(s) &** **Previewing Each Text** | **Learning Activity 1** | **Learning Activity 2** |
| Identifying the perspective of the text.Identifying author choices, form & topics.Identifying additional educational component of the source. | Poetry Surveying | Thematic Analysis |

**Meeting the Author(s):**

**Rationale:**

In the resource *Resurgence: Engaging with Indigenous Narratives and Cultural Expressions In and Beyond the Classroom* they advocate for the importance of starting with author bios,

**‘Each [author’s] biography is positioned before their text to emphasize their work and perspectives are integrally connected to place, local knowledge, and personal experiences (such as birth and relocation), and where their ancestors are from. Indigenous nations are diverse and, in their history, language, traditions and customs, and so are the experiences of Indigenous community members. Read each biography with your class and locate the [author’s] ancestral place on a map. They are inviting you into their life and story.’**

Christine M’lot (Anishinaabe), Katiya Adamov Ferguson (non-Indigenous)(pg 10)

**Supplies & Facilitation:**

Due to the number of physical resources, students can do this individually. You may choose to have students work independently or within partners/groups with the same poetry book.

Depending on your classroom structures – you may choose to provide a timed and facilitated passing of the resources from group to group (Example: 6-10 minute timer, and then pass). This structured process will take an entire block.

Or students may engage in this book previewing by moving themselves in a gallery walk type activity.

Or students may have the period to move through all texts in a less formal manner.

\*It will depend on your classroom, students ability to be independent to the task and on the time you are allotting to this activity.

It is up to you to decide if you are requiring students to all fill out the attached graphic organizer, recreate this organizer as a group on a chart paper etc.

**Instructions:**

Have students in groups engage with the **readily available** information about each author and the text. Emphasize that we aren’t reading the text yet, but doing some work to get ready to read. This means we need to understand all the components the author(s) of the text have created to support our reading.

Specifically, have students identify:

- the author’s Nation or Indigenous ancestry.
\*It should be noted to students that sometimes more than one contributor exists on the jacket or back of the book – this could be a co-author, illustrator and/or colorist; however, our focus is on the author.
- the date of publishing
- additional supports in the text that provide cultural and/or historical context to the story being shared (glossary of words, historical background, important preface, trigger warnings, themes, etc.)

**Individual or Group Names: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What is a question you have about this resource?** | **Identify from the jacket 3 key ideas., topics or themes of the text.** (See theme word bank on the reverse side of this page for support. Example: Family, Teachings,) | **Scan over 3-5 poems. Determine the level of the text.** (**mature** : frequent swearing, complex language, high level vocab, high level of prior knowledge ; **medium**: strong language, intermediate vocab, some prior knowledge needed; **entry**: clear language, straightforward vocab, no prior knowledge needed.)  | **How many pages?What is the average length of each poem?**(**Short:** less than a page; **medium:** full page; **long** (multiple pages) | **Publishing Date:** | **Author Name & Ancestry:**(Nation, Community etc.) | **Book Title:** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | **77 Fragments of Familiar Ruin** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | **river women** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | **Runaway Dreams** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | **A Really Good Brown Girl** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | **Totem Poles and Railroads** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | **this is a small northern town** |

**Themes and Topics: Theme Bank**

The following list, though not finite, identifies some themes and topics that are reoccurring in First Peoples worldviews and therefore present in their stories:

 • connection of people to the land and environment

 • interdependence & connectedness of everything

 • connection to spirit & spirituality

• sustainability & continuity

• responsibility to family and community

• importance of identity

• the nature of learning and connection to story

• transformation

• diversity

• tradition vs modernity

• importance of oral tradition

• relationship between individual, family, and community

• nature of knowledge

• experience and impacts of colonization

• decolonization

• humour and its role in First Peoples’ cultures

• intergenerational roles

• loss

• resilience and healing

• connection to ancestors

• importance of balance

Source:

FNESC/FNSA English First Peoples 10, 11, and 12 Teacher Resource Guide: Planning for Instruction (pg13)

**Learning Activity 1: Poetry Surveying**

**Rationale:**

**An effective implementation of English First Peoples 10-12 will draw attention to recurring themes that are often a part of the worldview of many First Peoples.**

FNESC/FNSA English First Peoples 10, 11, and 12 Teacher Resource Guide: Planning for Instruction (pg13)

On the journey of teaching and learning alongside students, one important shift is not just in the texts we teach, but in the topics/themes we emphasize about said texts. Looking at themes connected to the cultural and historical context of First Peoples, ensures that students are guided through the literature in a meaningful way. It also, in a practical sense, sets learners up for success – as they are seeking out what is surely present!

**Supplies & Facilitation:**

Theme bank, post-it notes and poetry books.

Decide if you will narrow down the themes with students or support their own theme selection. Depending on the grade and timing of the year – students will have varied ability to select their own theme.

Support students in selecting the poetry book and author they will work with independently. All of the details gathered in the previewing section will be relevant to make this decision.

In some cases the themes listed in the theme bank are multi-part – *experiences AND impacts of colonization*, or *relationships between individual, family AND community*. It might make sense in some cases to focus on a specific aspect of a theme.

Examples of relevant themes per book
(This is meant as a suggested but by no means complete!)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Poetry Book** | **Relevant Themes** |
| 77 Fragments of Familiar Ruin  | Sustainability, impacts of colonization, humour, etc. |
| river woman  | Land and environment, impacts of colonization, importance of balance, etc. |
| Runaway Dreams  | Relationships between individual, family and community, importance of identity, resilience and healing, etc. |
| A Really Good Brown Girl | Resilience and healing, experiences and impacts of colonization, land and environment, etc. |
| Totem Poles and Railroads  | Experience and impacts of colonization, loss, decolonization, etc. |
| this is a small northern town  | Experience and impacts of colonization, importance of identity, community, etc. |

**Instructions:**

Students should have a theme bank, post its and a poetry book.

Instruct students to flip through the poetry book, deciding if they want to read through in a linear or more scattered way. Encourage them to seek out poems or stories that they understand. Once they have found a poem or story that they understand, post-it note it! On the note, have students record relevant themes. Be sure to encourage students to select the most appropriate theme. Eventually, they will need to narrow in on a few poems and a single theme so providing one-two theme limit avoids students over-listing and making the selection process overly complicated.

Students will then repeat this process until they have 3-5 well selected poems, with a single theme. Provide students with this outcome when they begin, so they can independently practice the recursive process of poem and theme selection independently.

Tip: Encourage students to seek out both patterns but also nuanced connections to theme. For example, many of the poetry texts touch on topics of loss. Students may identify patterns that the loss is connected to colonization or racism etc. But they should also be encouraged to seek out the various types of loss. This ensures they have depth in their analysis.

**Learning Activity 2: Thematic Analysis**

Thinking about the concept of theme is not a new exercise for students – what may be new is the themes they are presented to choose from. The point of this thematic analysis is to apply common Indigenous literary themes to contemporary Indigenous literature. It is important not to supplant western themes to Indigenous literature.

**Supplies & Facilitation:**

Decide on the skills and end product of student learning. Depending on your grade, the curriculum and/or content goals can dictate the focus.

Ideas for an end goal might be:

- **Thematic Essay** (see Gr 11-12 “You Want Me To Write What?” – The Literary Essay (pgs 325-332)

- **Thematic PowerPoint Presentation** (students can present their theme, with slides for each poem, with explanations connecting to theme).

- **One Pager** – a full page that includes quotes from poems that are explained in connection to a theme.

- **Oral Recording** – students read aloud poems/excerpts from poems with explanation connected to theme.

Or an assignment of your design!