



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from our Recommended Multicultural and Anti-Bias Books for Children. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of early childhood and elementary aged children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Shin-chi's Canoe

Nicola I. Campbell (Author), Kim LaFave (Illustrator)

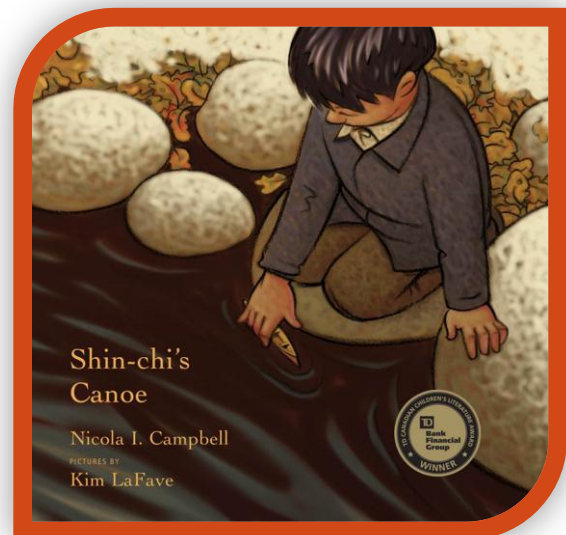
When Shi-shi-etko and Shin-chi arrive at the Indian Residential School, Shi-shi-etko reminds her younger brother that they can only use their English names and that they are not allowed to speak to each other. For Shin-chi, life becomes an endless cycle of church mass, school and work, punctuated by skimpy meals. He finds solace at the river, clutching a tiny cedar canoe, a gift from his father, and dreaming of the day when the salmon return to the river—a sign that it's almost time to return home. This poignant story about a devastating chapter in Native American history is told at a child's level of understanding.

ISBN: 978-0-88899-857-6

Publisher: Groundwood Books

Year Published: 2008

Age Range: 6-10



Book Themes

Family, Prejudice, Discrimination, Native American culture

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book and remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story.

- canoe
- carpentry
- cattle
- concentration

- Indian residential school
- kerosene
- mass
- laws
- memorize
- mischief
- porridge
- priests
- reservation
- salmon
- squint
- woodshed

Preparation for Reading

Prior to reading the book, you will need to provide some context and background for students about “Indian residential schools.” In an age-appropriate way, explain that from the late 1800s until the 1970s, Native American children were sent to government-mandated, church-run boarding schools in the United States and Canada. The government operated as many as 100 boarding schools for Native Americans, both on and off reservations, and more than 100,000 Native American children in the U.S. went to these schools. The purpose was to educate Native American children according to European and American standards and traditions. The children were given short haircuts, uniforms and English names. The children were encouraged or forced to abandon many aspects of their Native American identities and culture. They were not allowed to speak their own languages—even between each other—and were expected to attend church services and encouraged to convert to Christianity. Discipline was strict in these schools, which often included chores and punishments. You can also explain to students that even though the term “Indian” is used in the book, the preferred term to use is “Native American.”

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Based on the title, what do you think the book might be about?
- Does the picture on the cover give us any clues?

Ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout the reading of the book to check comprehension and keep the students engaged:

- How did Shi-shi-etko get punished at the residential school? (page 5)
- What are Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko’s English names? (page 14)
- What did Shin-chi and his new friend like to do together? (page 28)

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these questions:

- What happened in the story?
- How did you feel while listening to the story?
- Why are Shin-chi and his sister Shi-shi-etko going to an Indian Residential School?
- How do they feel about going?
- Why did Shi-shi-etko ask Yayah (her Grandma) to cut her hair?
- Why do you think Shin-chi’s father gave him a tiny canoe? How did Shin-chi use it when he was away at the residential school?

- Why did Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko want their own canoe?
- What did Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko miss about their home?
- What can you say about Shin-chi's personality based on the story?
- Why do you think they gave English names to the children at the Indian residential school?
- What was everyday life like at the Indian residential school?
- Did the children like it? Why or why not?
- How did Shin-chi know that they were going home soon?
- How did Shi-shi-etko and Shin-chi feel when they arrived back home? How do you know?
- What do you think about Native American children being forced to attend these schools? What makes you think that?
- What new information did you learn about Native Americans by reading the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with children in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Write Haiku Poems About Nature

Nature and the natural world are themes in the book. To explore this in more depth, teach students how to write haiku poems about the elements of nature that are mentioned in the book. First, have students brainstorm all the different aspects of nature that came into the plot of the story. These may include sockeye salmon, trees, river, fishing, snow and eagles. After brainstorming, define each word to make sure students understand the meaning of each. Ask students to choose one of the items in nature they would like to write a poem about. Explain that they will write haiku poems, which are often about nature and which have a consistent structure based on syllables. Before starting their poems, have students make a list of words and ideas they have about their chosen word/topic. For example, if they are writing about snow, their words might include: white, fluffy, cold, fun to play in. After they come up with words and ideas, explain the concept of a haiku poem: each haiku poem includes three lines; the first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables and the last line also has five syllables. Make sure students understand the concept of syllables; share examples to explain that the amount of syllables needed in each line can be fulfilled through several words or just one or two. Have students write their poems, illustrate them if they like and then share aloud with the class. Here are two examples of haikus:

Sample Haikus

Pink cherry blossoms
Looking like cotton candy
On the grass out front

Raindrops, wet and clear
Are cool, against my warm face
Summertime showers

2. Write and Illustrate Additional Pages of the Book

In the last scene of the book, Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko return home and immediately run to their father's woodshed to see the canoe he is making for them. Read aloud the last few pages of the book and ask students: *What do you think might happen next in the story if it were to continue? How do you think Shi-shi-etko and Shin-chi feel about having their own canoe? What do you think*

Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko are going to do on their first few days home? Have students imagine what would happen in the book if it continued for a few more pages. Instruct them to take their ideas and write and/or draw the next scene or two as they imagine it. If younger students want to write but cannot do so, you can transcribe for them. When completed, students can share their drawings and pages of the book with the rest of the class.

3. Learn More About Native American History and Culture

As a follow-up to reading the book, explore Native American history, culture and the discrimination faced by Native American people. Read other fiction and non-fiction books about Native American people using the website [American Indians in Children's Literature](#) for suggested children's books at different age levels. This website also includes additional [resources for projects on American Indians](#). With students, learn about the culture of different tribes including language, beliefs, ways of life, traditions, tribal history, folktales, etc. and make sure to help students understand there are numerous and distinct tribes in the United States. You can also explore the different ways that prejudice and discrimination manifest themselves currently against Native Americans including the perpetuation of stereotypes in the media (books, movies, TV shows, etc.) and using Native American mascots in sports. Other useful resources are [Oyate](#), Scholastic's [Native American Heritage: Everything You Need](#) and the Early Childhood and Parenting's [Teaching Young Children about Native Americans](#).

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on Native American history and culture and anti-bias teaching strategies.

Curriculum Resources

"Lewis and Clark: Unheard Voices," *Curriculum Connections* Winter 2005,

http://archive.adl.org/education/curriculum_connections/elementary_school_lesson_fall_2004.html?cc_section=elementarylevelunit.

Websites

Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying. See also, [Additional Anti-Bias Resources](#).

The Question Corner

www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood/c/the-question-corner.html

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Native American, <http://archive.adl.org/bibliography/defaulta81c.html>