

A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO COYOTE TALES

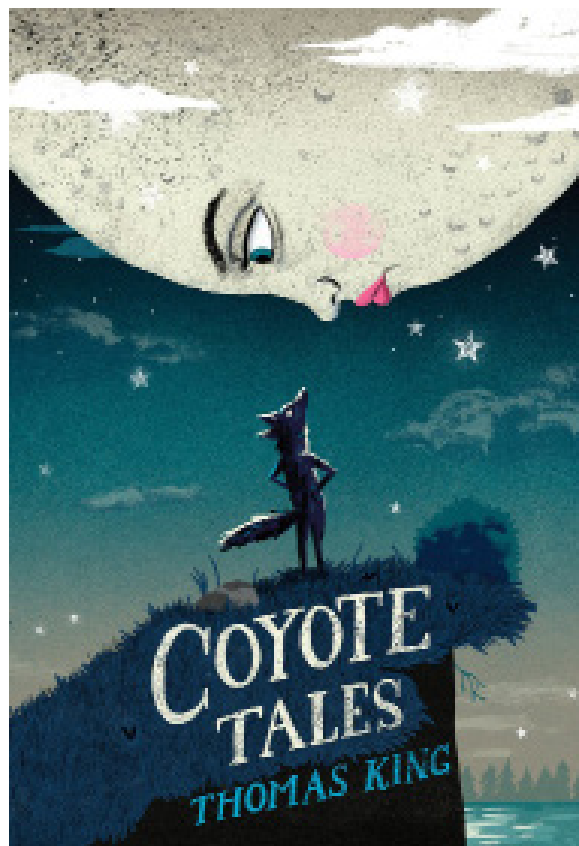
Written by Thomas King and illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler

ABOUT THE BOOK

Two tales, set in a time “when animals and human beings still talked to each other,” display Thomas King’s cheeky humor and master storytelling skills. Freshly illustrated and reissued as an early chapter book, these stories are perfect for newly independent readers.

In “Coyote Sings to the Moon,” Coyote is at first the cause of misfortune. In those days, when the moon was much brighter and closer to the earth, Old Woman and the animals would sing to her each night. Coyote attempts to join them, but his voice is so terrible they beg him to stop. He is crushed and lashes out — who needs Moon anyway? Furious, Moon dives into a pond, plunging the world into darkness. But clever Old Woman comes up with a plan to send Moon back up into the sky and, thanks to Coyote, there she stays.

In “Coyote’s New Suit,” mischievous Raven wreaks havoc when she suggests that Coyote’s toasty brown suit is not the finest in the forest, thus prompting him to steal suits belonging to all the other animals. Meanwhile, Raven tells the other animals to borrow clothes from the humans’ camp. When Coyote finds that his closet is too full, Raven slyly suggests he hold a yard sale, then sends the human beings (in their underwear) and the animals (in their ill-fitting human clothes) along for the fun. A hilarious illustration of the consequences of wanting more than we need.



Coyote Tales

Written by Thomas King

Illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler

JUVENILE FICTION

Reading Ages 6 to 9

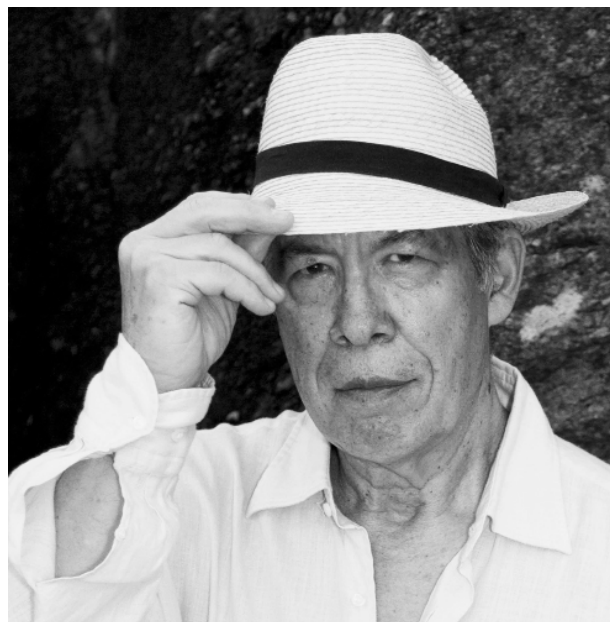
97-8-155498-8-334

Hardcover with jacket

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas King has written several highly acclaimed children's books, including *A Coyote Columbus Story*, illustrated by William Kent Monkman, which was a Governor General's Literary Award finalist. He has also written *Coyote Tales*, illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler. King, who is of Cherokee and Greek descent, was a Professor of English at the University of Guelph for many years, where he taught Native Literature and Creative Writing. He won the RBC Taylor Prize and the British Columbia National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction for *The Inconvenient Indian*, and the Governor General's Literary Award for his adult novel, *The Back of the Turtle*.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Byron Eggenschwiler is an award-winning illustrator whose many clients include the *New York Times*; the *Wall Street Journal*; *GQ*; the *National Post*; *O*, *The Oprah Magazine*; the *Walrus* and Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. His recent work includes *Operatic*, a young-adult graphic novel written by Kyo Maclear. Byron lives in Calgary.



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BEFORE READING

Tricksters

With students, research Coyote and Raven and the connection to tricksters. Ask students: What makes a character a trickster? What other tricksters can you find in Indigenous storytelling? Have students build a word wall of the different tricksters in Indigenous cultures, their traits and associated vocabulary.

Anticipation Guide

Have students answer true or false to the following statements. They may give more details for a deeper exploration.

Raven is not a trickster.

Coyote is the only trickster in Indigenous stories.

Indigenous peoples have a strong connection to land and animals.

Animals can speak to one another.

People can speak to animals.

Coyote and Raven are seen as bad characters.

A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO COYOTE TALES

BEFORE READING

Activate student thinking around the Seven Teachings and the tricksters in these stories. Examine how each of the tricksters and animals exemplify each of these qualities, as well as their opposites (i.e., disrespect, lies, bragging, dishonesty, hate, foolishness, cowardice).

The Seven Teachings:

- Respect
- Truth
- Humility
- Honesty
- Love
- Wisdom
- Bravery

Supporting resource: “The Gifts of the Seven Grandfathers.”

<http://ojibwe.net/projects/prayers-teachings/the-gifts-of-the-seven-grandfathers/>

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DURING READING

Think Aloud

Model a Think Aloud using the focus question: “How does Coyote’s disrespect create chaos in the lives around him?” Make predictions and confirm as the story is read aloud.

Have students examine and learn more about Indigenous peoples and Indigenous storytelling using trips to the library, books and videos (www.youtube.com). Words, themes and exemplars can be posted on a class word wall as a visual reference for students.



A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO COYOTE TALES

DURING READING

Discussion Questions

To support discussion:

In Indigenous cultures, extrinsic gifts are given not only to celebrate a special occasion but also to honor and thank special people for their contribution and sharing their knowledge and skills. A good example is the gift of tobacco to an Elder who has shared a story or knowledge with students. These gifts are considered sacred and must be given in a good spirit and in the correct manner (usually from the left hand as it is closest to the heart), and must be treated with respect and humility.

Intrinsic gifts, or strengths, are the qualities in people that they contribute to the community or classroom. These might be kindness, empathy, friendship or even organizational skills. Students and teachers each bring gifts (or strengths) to the classroom.

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DURING READING

Read the following quote from the book *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations* by Richard Wagamese (Douglas & McIntyre, 2016, p. 81):

Honouring Gifts:

Me: What's the hardest spiritual thing I'm ever going to have to do?

Old Woman: To see every person as a gift.

Me: What kind of a gift?

Old Woman: The best kind. Based on the way you receive them.

Me: I don't get it.

Old Woman: I know. But you will. If you receive others as worthy, lovable, spiritual creations — perfect just the way they are — you get to see the highest possible version of who you are. You get to be that. Experience that. And you become a gift to the world.

Me: Sounds hard.

Old Woman: The longer you think that, the harder it gets.

The funny thing is, she was right.

The Wagamese quote is speaking to the fact that if you believe that it is difficult to see the good or worthiness in others and spend your time puzzling over the paradox, the more difficult it is to see and realize the best possible you.

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DURING READING

Sharing Circle

Lead a circle by sharing the gifts you bring to the classroom as a teacher. Have students share the gifts they bring to the classroom every day.

This is an opportunity to provide examples of strengths or gifts that the teacher brings to the classroom (i.e., work ethic, caring nature, organization, etc.). Sharing his/her gifts with the students helps students identify their own gifts (strengths) that they bring to the class and community.



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AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

These are guiding questions that can be discussed orally — as a shared response as a class or in small groups — or completed as individual reading responses.

- Both the tales in this book tell how Coyote creates chaos in his community. In the end, how do Coyote's actions support building relationships in the community?

Curriculum Connections: English/Literacy (Inferring, Making Connections), Social Studies (Communities)

- When we do not celebrate the gifts of everyone in our community, does this lead to chaos? Discuss and have students explain their thinking.

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies (Communities), Character Education

- In “Coyote Sings to the Moon,” the animals lose their moon. How does this contribute to a loss of connection to the land for the community?

Extended Connections: How were Indigenous communities connected to the land before settlers arrived? How have Indigenous peoples lost their connection to the land after forced relocations and the Indian Act?

Curriculum Connections: English/Literacy, Social Studies, History, Indigenous Studies

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AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

- In “Coyote’s New Suit,” the animals lose their suits. How does this contribute to a loss of their identities?

Extended Connections: What were Indigenous communities like before the settlers arrived? How have the identities of Indigenous communities changed since first contact? What aspects of the Indian Act have changed Indigenous peoples’ identities?

Curriculum Connections: English/Literacy, Indigenous Studies, History, Social Studies, Art



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CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

English / Literacy
Character Education
Social Studies
History
Indigenous Studies
Art



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Web Resources

Coyote the Trickster:

Sutherland, A. "Coyote — Native American Trickster, Creator, And Sacred Animal Who Can Deceive But Also Give Wisdom." Ancient Pages, April 28, 2017.

<http://bit.ly/2CuFBgu>

Gradual Civilization Act:

Robinson, Amanda. "Gradual Civilization Act." The Canadian Encyclopedia, March 3, 2016.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/gradual-civilization-act/>

Nanabozho:

Lewis, Orrin, and Laura Redish. "Legendary Native American Figures: Nanabozho (Nanabush)." Native Languages of the Americans, accessed October 30, 2018.

<http://www.native-languages.org/nanabozho.htm>

Indian Act:

Indian Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. I-5. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/>

Sharing Circles:

"Talking Circles." First Nations Pedagogy, accessed October 30, 2018.

<http://bit.ly/2PvOCv8>