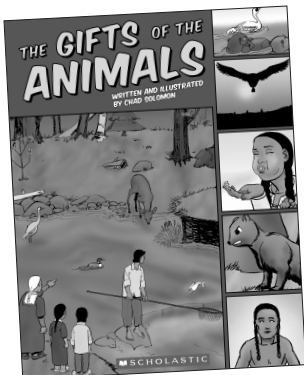


# THE GIFTS OF THE ANIMALS

Written and Illustrated by Chad Solomon

**TEXT TYPE:** Fiction: Narrative—Graphic Novel/Traditional Tale  
**GUIDED READING LEVEL:** T



**SUMMARY:** During a family fishing trip, two siblings named Art and Sil are fighting once again. Tired of their arguing, Nokomis (their grandmother) decides to tell the traditional tale of Sky Woman and the clans of the Anishinaabe. Nokomis hopes this traditional tale will teach an important lesson about how to deal with differences and conflict.

## TEXT FEATURES

- glossary and Anishinaabemowin translations
- pronunciation breakdowns
- author's note
- graphic novel format with boxed frames
- headings

## VISUAL LITERACY

- speech balloons
- illustrations
- text boxes

## TEXT SUPPORTS

- glossary and Anishinaabemowin translations
- pronunciation breakdowns
- bright, engaging layout
- supportive illustrations

## POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- lack of familiarity with Anishinaabe culture
- challenging vocabulary for both word recognition and word meaning (e.g., 'inundated,' 'torrential,' 'isolated,' 'solitude,' 'unconscious')
- some difficult names (e.g., 'Waawaashkesh,' 'Giigoonh,' 'Nokomis')
- some complex sentence structures (semicolon, ellipses, dash)

## FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- inferring

## FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- analyzing
- making connections: text to world

## ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Place Mat strategy
- Sketch Connections activity
- sharing ideas
- storytelling (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

## WORKING WITH WORDS

- language predictability: using context to work out word meanings
- word solving and building: using chunking and syllabication

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student's ability to:

- make inferences from information in text and interpretation of picture clues
- draw from personal experiences and knowledge to work out what is happening in text
- visualize what the author has not fully explained
- analyze text to work out what main ideas are
- make text to world connections

## ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Inferring Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

# First Session (pages 1–8)

## BEFORE READING

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### Inferring

### **Activate and build prior knowledge**

- Examine front and back covers and read the blurb together. Explain to students that they will be reading a traditional Anishinaabe tale. Activate existing background knowledge related to the Anishinaabe culture. Ask: *What information do you know about the Anishinaabe culture? Based on the front cover illustration, what can you infer about this culture?*

### Text and Visual Literacy Features

- Ask, *What is a traditional tale?* Explain to students that a traditional tale tells a story that is often passed through generations orally, and it usually teaches or imparts some kind of lesson or belief of those passing on the story.

- Have students quickly flip through the text. Ask what kind of text this is. If some students identify this as a comic note that they are very close—this text is a graphic novel. That is, it is a story that includes both pictures and text similar to a comic book. Like a comic book, a graphic novel presents the information with panels (frames), speech balloons, and so on. However it is presented in the form of a bound book that might include other text features not typical of a comic, like the author’s note and glossary seen at the end.

### Visual Literacy Features

### **Introduce supports and challenges**

- As a group, talk about how the visual features assist the reader in understanding the text. Remind students of the importance of carefully studying the illustrations while reading. The illustrations in a graphic novel provide additional information and clues not provided in the written text, which is often brief and condensed.

### Inferring

- Direct students to page 5. Invite students to read the speech bubbles and study the illustration found in the middle frame. Ask, *What can you infer from this frame? What is meant by ‘older brothers’? What specific clues in the illustrations help you to make these inferences?* While guiding students to infer, it is important to use student-friendly language. You may use the term ‘inferring,’ or you may decide to refer to this strategy as ‘using clues.’

- On the same page locate the word ‘Miigwech,’ in the first frame. Explain that this story has some unfamiliar language from the Anishinaabe culture. Say, *As you read this story you will encounter some challenging words. There are clues in the written text and illustrations which can help you to infer the meaning of these words. Look closely at the illustration and speech bubbles in this frame. Ask, How can the information in the speech bubbles and the illustrations help you to infer the meaning of Miigwech?* Provide time for students to share their inferences.

## Text Features

- Remind students of the importance of using the glossary provided by the author. Invite students to locate the word ‘Miigwech’ in the glossary, and compare their inferences to the definition provided.

## Inferring

### **Set a purpose for reading**

- Instruct students to read to the end of page 8. Challenge students to use the speech balloons, text boxes, and illustrations to make inferences about the main characters and story plot. Say, *As you read the first section of this tale, pay close attention to speech balloons, written text, and illustrations. Ask, What can you infer about the relationship between Art and Sil? How do Art and Sil feel toward each other? What clues does the author provide to help you learn more about this relationship?*

### **Provide for early finishers**

- Provide early finishers with sticky notes. Direct these students to revisit a specific story frame and record inferences made while reading this frame. An early finisher may partner with another early finisher to share inferences recorded on sticky notes.

## **DURING READING**

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### **Monitor reading**

- Have each student read a portion of the text aloud to you. Assist with word solving, vocabulary, and comprehension of written text and both text and visual literacy features. Always provide a comprehension prompt that highlights the focus strategy (inferring), e.g., *What did the author mean? What clues do the illustrations and speech balloons provide? What is the character thinking? What is the character feeling? How do you know?*

### **Observe**

- Note any successful reading strategies you observe, e.g., students reading beyond the given text to visualize and read between the lines or perhaps think of their own experiences and apply them to what might be happening, and students using the context or glossary to work out unknown words.

## **AFTER READING**

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## Inferring

### **Revisit the purpose for reading**

- Revisit your purpose for reading. Discuss: *How might you describe the relationship between Art and Sil? What clues helped you to make inferences about their relationship? Can you elaborate?*
- Revisit the frames on page 8. Ask, *How is Nokomis feeling at this*

point in the story? What clues does the author provide to tell us about what Nokomis is thinking and feeling? These questions can be used to facilitate a Place Mat oral language activity (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 5 Literacy Support Guide*).

### **Check on outstanding challenges**

- Your observations will help you work out other challenges students experienced. Discuss and clarify at this point, e.g., a difficult word, or a visual challenge like reading the speech balloons and frames in the correct sequence.

### **Note successful strategy use**

- Explain a successful reading strategy you observed, e.g., *When Cameron was reading, I noticed how he used the clues in the illustrations and the information in the written text to help determine what he thought the main character was thinking and feeling. This is a good example of reading 'between the lines' when the author does not tell us everything.*

## **Optional Approach**

### **Inferring**

You may wish to have students read the rest of the text independently. Set a purpose for reading and choose a date to come back together to discuss and work with the text using the Optional After Reading session (see page 8). It is recommended that you do some diagnostic work with students or hold a book discussion halfway through to check their comprehension of the text.

#### **Setting a Purpose**

Read the rest of the tale in order to determine how the traditional Anishinaabe story of Sky Woman and Kitchi-Manitou changes the way in which Art and Sil treat each other. Encourage students to think about the gifts the animals have been given as well as how their gifts and stories inspire humanity.

## **Second Session (pages 9–19)**

### **BEFORE READING**

### **Inferring**

#### **Activate and build prior knowledge**

- Review why it is important for readers to make inferences using the clues provided in the text. Encourage students to think metacognitively. Ask, *How does inferring help you as a reader?* Record student responses on an anchor chart.

**ESL NOTE:** Inferring can be a difficult strategy. As such, consider providing visual support for the ESL learner by displaying an already-made anchor chart on inferring. This will allow the ESL learner to participate in the discussion around the importance of making inferences using the author's clues.

**Language Predictability  
and Inferring**

**Word Solving and Building**

**Inferring**

**Introduce supports and challenges**

- Invite students to independently read pages 9–11. Note the time transition which has now occurred in the story. Discuss: *How is Kitchi-Manitou feeling? What is Kitchi-Manitou thinking? How do you know?*
- Direct students to page 12 and locate the word ‘solitude’ (located in the first frame). Invite students to use the context clues provided in the text and illustrations to identify the meaning of this word. Ask, *What else is being discussed in this sentence that might shed some light on the meaning of this word?*
- Comment on how the illustrations on this page support the definition of ‘solitude.’ Tell students that sometimes the author provides the definition within the sentence, while other times the reader has to search for clues in order to infer the meaning of a challenging word.
- Direct students to the third frame on page 11. Point out the word ‘inundated.’ Encourage students to use a variety of strategies to read this multisyllabic word. Ask, *How could you chunk this word in order to read it?*

**Set a purpose for reading**

- Instruct students to read to the end of page 19. Say, *As you read this section of the text, think about what you can learn about Sky Woman’s life. What is Sky Woman thinking as the story plot unfolds? How is she feeling? What clues does the graphic novel provide to help you make these inferences?*

**Provide for early finishers**

- Ask early finishers if they can identify two gifts water beings have given to Sky Woman.

**DURING READING**

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**Monitor reading**

- Have each student read a portion of the text aloud to you. Assist with word solving, vocabulary, and comprehension of written text and both text and visual literacy features. Always provide a comprehension prompt that highlights the focus strategy (inferring), e.g., *How do you think Sky Woman is feeling after her partner had to leave on a hunting trip? Can you remember a time when someone important to you went away and how it made you feel? Why do you think the water beings wanted to help Sky Woman?*

**Observe**

- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the Inferring Strategy Checklist and the Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record in the *Grade 5 Literacy Support Guide*.)

## AFTER READING

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### Inferring

#### **Revisit the purpose for reading**

- Revisit your purpose for reading. Invite students to participate in an activity called ‘Sketch Connections.’ Each student will need a blank piece of paper. Ask each student to sketch a picture of Sky Woman. Surrounding this picture, students are instructed to write notes or labels indicating what this main character might be thinking and feeling during a specific time or event in the story (inferences). When sharing their ‘Sketch Connections,’ have students explain the clues they used from the text to determine what Sky Woman might be thinking or feeling.

#### **Check on outstanding challenges**

- Your observations will help you work out other challenges students experienced. Discuss and clarify at this point, e.g., a challenging word or difficult punctuation and sentence structure such as the use of ellipses and semicolons. Remind students to use the glossary to assist in understanding unfamiliar Anishinaabe terms.

#### **Note successful strategy use**

- Explain a successful reading strategy you observed, e.g., *I asked Hannah to identify where the author did an effective job providing visual clues to infer meaning from. She was able to share this illustration with me, and then made connections between the information shown in the illustration and the written text.*

## Third Session (pages 20–32)

### Making Connections: Text to World

### Word Solving and Building

## BEFORE READING

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#### **Activate and build prior knowledge**

- Ask students what associations they have with different kinds of animals. Are there certain associations some people have with cats or dogs, for example, that reflect the characteristics of that animal? Model an association you might have. For example, *When I think of lions I think of a very strong animal that is a fearsome hunter and an animal that commands instant respect and attention because of its strength and size.* Then let students know that in this session they will be reading about how the characteristics, or gifts, of animals inspired the laws of the Anishinaabe people.

#### **Introduce supports and challenges**

- Direct students to the glossary and Anishinaabemowin translations located on page 32. Locate the names of the seven clans of Anishinaabe. Discuss how to read these names by chunking them into

their syllables. Note how the pronunciations are provided for the reader in parentheses. This is a valuable guide for students.

## Analyzing

### **Set a purpose for reading**

- Direct students to read pages 20–32 in order to learn about the seven clans. Students may wish to highlight key information on each clan using sticky notes. Direct students to pay close attention to how Art and Sil feel about each other. These tasks can be done largely by analyzing the text and illustrations.

### **Provide for early finishers**

- Invite early finishers to jot down any questions they may still have about the story. An early finisher can partner with another early finisher to share and discuss their questions.

## **DURING READING**

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### **Monitor reading**

- Are students having success analyzing the important points? Are they using their sticky notes?

### **Observe**

- Note any successful reading strategies you observe, e.g., students' ability to identify what unique strengths and gifts the animals bring to their clans.

## **AFTER READING**

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## Analyzing

### **Revisit the purpose for reading**

- Note that as the tale concludes there is a good opportunity to find out an important idea of the story by looking at the conversation between Nokomis, Sil, and Art. Have students point out what the main ideas of the novel are by reviewing this conversation. Also, have students highlight what some of the main characteristics of each clan member are. Students should refer to their sticky notes.

### **Check on outstanding challenges**

- One of the significant challenges in this session is the pronunciation of Anishinaabe names. Provide assistance where needed in chunking these words. Remind students that the pronunciations provided on page 32 are a key tool for helping them with these words.

### **Note successful strategy use**

- Explain a successful reading strategy you observed, e.g., *Anthony told me how this story reminded him of tales his grandfather has told him.*

said that although the tales were different what he found common was there was a lesson to be learned in both Nokomis' story and those told by his grandfather. This is a fine example of making a connection to your own experiences to better understand this graphic novel.

## Optional After Reading

### Inferring

If students have completed the text independently, use the following After Reading Discussion and activity suggestions to support comprehension, word solving, and good reader strategies.

Discuss: *How might the traditional Anishinaabe story of Sky Woman and Kitchi-Manitou change the way in which Art and Sil treat each other in the future?*

### Synthesizing

You may wish to have students complete an individual written response in the role of one of the main characters. Provide a writing prompt such as, *Describe how this tale has helped you learn an important lesson about dealing with differences.*

## FOCUSED REREADING

Three options are provided for focused rereading in the next Guided Reading lesson. Choose an activity that meets the needs of your students, or you might select a Reader Response activity from the *Grade 5 Literacy Support Guide*.

### Inferring: Visualizing

#### Written

- Instruct each student to select a section of the traditional story about Kitchi-Manitou and Sky Woman. Students should visualize the events which may have occurred between the story's frames. Students can then create their own graphic novel inspired by these inferences. Remind students to use their background knowledge and clues from the written text and illustrations. When completed, the assignment should look just like a graphic novel, containing the major features of a graphic novel discussed in these sessions.

### Analyzing

#### Artistic

- Invite students to select one of the seven animal clans presented in this traditional tale. Direct students to create a family emblem or banner to illustrate the importance of this clan. Through words and labels, students can show the important facts and qualities represented in the clan.

### Synthesizing

#### Oral/dramatic

- Invite students to practise retelling this traditional tale. Students can work collaboratively to retell the tale to the rest of the class. Students may decide to use music or props to enrich this storytelling event.