



THE WOODEN LOON

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TEXT TYPE: Fiction: Narrative—Fantasy Story
GUIDED READING LEVEL: T

SUMMARY: In this fantasy story, Wenonah, a young Ojibwe girl who becomes blind after witnessing the fire that killed her parents, learns of the plight of a loon and its chicks near her log house by the lake. Using her treasured wooden loon, a gift made by her grandfather, she devises a plan to save the chicks. As a reward for her compassion and selflessness, a miracle occurs and her sight is restored.

TEXT FEATURES

- Ojibwe translation alongside English text
- flashback and ‘flash forward’
- subject-specific vocabulary and references to nature and wildlife in northern Canada
- italics
- oak leaf/acorn icons indicating passage of time
- Ojibwe Words page

VISUAL LITERACY

- illustrations
- symbols

TEXT SUPPORTS

- illustrations
- Ojibwe Words page

POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- flashback and ‘flash forward’
- vocabulary describing life in northern Canada
- vocabulary describing Ojibwe customs
- Ojibwe references to moons

FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- inferring

FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- making connections: text to text, text to self
- predicting

ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Value Line strategy
- sharing ideas
- discussing with a partner
- Reader’s Theatre activity (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

WORKING WITH WORDS

- high-frequency words: recognizes words linked to other curriculum areas and community
- language predictability: how personification and sensory language convey meaning

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student’s ability to:

- visualize text from author’s descriptions
- use relevant background knowledge to make inferences
- cite evidence from the text and background knowledge to support inferences
- identify elements of a fantasy text
- follow up on predictions

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Inferring Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

First Session (pages 2–16)

BEFORE READING

Making Connections: Text to Text

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Tell students that the book they are about to read is a narrative fantasy story about a young Ojibwe girl and her grandmother. Ask students what they know about the fantasy genre (e.g., Harry Potter books, *Charlotte’s Web*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*). Say, *The narrative fantasy has elements of a narrative: setting, characters, plot, and so on, as well as features of a fantasy, like magic, the interweaving of real and imagined or supernatural worlds, the use of animals in the storytelling, and the theme of good versus evil.*

ESL NOTE: Write the elements of fantasy on chart paper for reference.

Text Features

- Distribute the text to group members. Ask students to look at the front cover of the text, noting the two titles. Say, *This book is presented in two languages: English and Ojibwe.* Quickly flip through the book with students, not reading any passage in particular. Note to students how the two languages appear alongside each other. Ask students, *Why might the author have decided to present this story in two languages?*

High-Frequency Words

- List the following words ahead of time on chart paper: ‘pine log walls’ (page 4), ‘wood ash’ (page 4), ‘bow’ (page 4), ‘stern’ (page 4), ‘sacred’ (page 6), ‘whippoorwill’ (page 6), and ‘tremolo’ (page 12). Focus on the list and say, *The author helps us visualize the scenes in the story, using these and other words.* Ask students to think about where they may have encountered these words (e.g., stories and informational texts, social studies and Plant and Animal Life Systems tutorials, music classes, curriculum on First Nations peoples, or via previous exposure through activities in their community).

Introduce supports and challenges

Predicting

- Encourage students to ask questions and make predictions based on information gleaned from the front and back covers and what they know about the fantasy genre. Tell students that they should follow up on their predictions as they read the text.

Text Features

- Point out the oak leaf/acorn icons on pages 8 and 12. Ask students why they think the icons are placed at these parts of the text. Ask them to think about the text that comes after these icons in both examples. What do they notice about the text? If students have not offered an accurate response, explain to them that these icons represent the passage of time—the story jumps to a new point in time after the appearance of these icons.

Language Predictability and Inferring: Visualizing

Inferring

- Ask students to close their eyes and visualize the setting as you read aloud the first paragraph on page 2. Say, *The author uses a literary technique called ‘personification’ when she describes the arrival of spring: ‘Spring arrived shyly, tiptoeing through the great northern forest on the glistening droplets of meltwater.’* Discuss how the use of personification and sensory language in this description affects the reader. If not touched on by students, explain that the setting is introduced as calm and peaceful in the transition from winter to the waking vitality of spring. Point out to students that this kind of sensory language helps us visualize the scene the author is attempting to create.
- Tell students that the Ojibwe refer to the presence of moons in the sky during specific months. Ask them to infer which month might be referred to as ‘the Moon of Bright Nights when the robins return to the northland’ (page 8), and to explain their inference.

Set a purpose for reading

- Say, *Today, we are going to focus on inferring as we read this story. The author doesn’t always tell us everything about what is going on, but wants us to pick up on clues in order to fill in the gaps. When we infer meaning, we go beyond the words in the text to determine what is implied by the author, though not explicitly stated in the text. We can also combine information or clues from the text with our own background knowledge and experience to figure out what the author didn’t tell us.*
- Together with students, create and complete the following organizer on chart paper, to support them in making and explaining their inferences based on relevant background knowledge and experience:

In the text the author says...	I know from my background knowledge and experience...	This helps me infer...
-‘broad drifts of daffodils heralded the miracle of rebirth.’ (page 2)	-Daffodils are one of the first plants to announce (herald) the arrival of spring. -Daffodils are perennial plants that come up (are reborn) in the same place each spring.	-The author feels that whenever something is born, it’s a miracle; something sacred to be treasured.

- Tell students to read to the end of page 16. Say, *While reading, mark your inferences by writing ‘I’ on a sticky note and placing it beside the word(s) or clues in the text that help you infer what the author is indirectly saying. Use the inferring organizer to explore and support your*

inferences about anything in the text. Ask students to create a version of the organizer in their reading response journal and to record at least two inferences. Inferences should be written in their organizer, as seen modelled in the example given.

Provide for early finishers

- Ask early finishers to explain their inferences to a partner.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- As they read independently, ask individual students to read aloud portions of the text where they have inferred meaning. Assist them with prompts as needed, e.g., *Why do you think Pitchi whispered, ‘We mustn’t come so close again’ on page 12? What do you picture in your head? What other clues did the author give you to make you think this way?*

Observe

- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the Inferring Strategy Checklist and the Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*.)

AFTER READING

Revisit the purpose for reading

- Ask students to refer to their sticky notes and to the inferring organizer in their reading response journals to support them as they explain their inferences to the rest of the reading group. Record some of the students’ inferences on the larger class organizer created earlier, time permitting. Alternatively, ask students to record one of the inferences they shared with the group on the class organizer, after the session.

Check on outstanding challenges

- Ask students to follow up on their predictions about the first part of the story. Then, ask them to briefly discuss the elements of the fantasy that have been introduced in the story (e.g., the plight of good over evil: ‘huge, cruel hands wresting the wooden loon from her arms’ found on page 14; the killing of the loon, contrasted by Wenonah’s selfless gesture).
- Encourage students to discuss any areas of confusion and questions they may have about the text and the inferences made this session.

Inferring

Note successful strategy use

- Highlight and praise successful strategy use as students refer to and add to their graphic organizer. Consider the following examples:
 - *When Oral read about how Pitchi taught Wenonah how to swim and travel by canoe, he thought about the time his brother had taught him to fish. His brother had taken the time to do this and was very patient when Oral didn't catch on right away. This helped Oral infer that Wenonah and Pitchi had a very close relationship, like the one he has with his brother. This is not only a great example of inferring, but a wonderful use of making connections to something you've experienced. Well done, Oral.*
 - *I noticed that even though you were not familiar with the words 'whippoorwill' and 'blue heron' on page 6, you inferred that they were the names of birds because you knew that 'squawked' (page 6) represents a bird sound.*

Second Session (pages 18–32)

Predicting

Text Features

Making Connections: Text to Self and Predicting

Inferring

BEFORE READING

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Hold a Value Line activity for students (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*). Ask them to stand at the spot on the value line that reflects whether or not they think Wenonah's plan will work, and to explain their reasoning when called on.
- *Say, So far you might be wondering why 'The Wooden Loon' is considered a fantasy story, as the text has been pretty realistic in tone and theme. We will now be moving into the fantasy part of the narrative. Watch out for elements of magic, the interweaving of real and supernatural worlds, the use of animals, and the theme of good over evil—all elements that are often present in fantasy stories, as we noted last session.*
- Ask students whether or not they have ever had a dream that has come true, and if so, to briefly share their experience. Say, *Wenonah has a dream in which she meets a visitor who grants her a wish. Who do you think the visitor is? Ask them to predict what they think might happen, keeping in mind that it's a fantasy story. Provide prompts such as, The title of the story is 'The Wooden Loon.' What do you think the role of Wenonah's wooden loon might be in this fantasy?*

Introduce supports and challenges

- Tell students that the author refers to the Northern lights in the story.

Ask them what they know about this phenomenon. Locate the text on page 22 that describes the Northern lights: ‘... the night passed strangely. Northern lights danced across the sky, shaking their robes of eerie green, blue, and silver.’ Ask students to infer why the author might use this real world setting in a fantasy story.

Sequencing

- Tell students that they will be able to infer and learn about some Ojibwe beliefs and customs as they read to the end of the story, e.g., the importance of dreams, storytelling, and spirits. Clarify the meaning of ‘spirits’ as they relate to Ojibwe life, if needed.
- Ask students to look for clues and signal text in the description of the landscape and the seasons, which alert the reader of the passage of time in the story.
- Remind students that the author used a ‘flashback’ in the first session’s reading and that she uses a ‘flash forward’ at the end of the story. Ask students what they think a ‘flash forward’ might be.

Inferring: Visualizing

- Say, *When you come to the quotation marks and dialogue in the story, use visualizing strategies to infer who is speaking.*

Inferring

Set a purpose for reading

- Ask students to continue to mark and track their inferences on sticky notes, using their inferring organizer to explore and record at least two inferences.

ESL NOTE: If students are having trouble making inferences, have them pair up with a stronger reader to complete the inferring organizer.

Provide for early finishers

- Ask students who finish reading early to meet with a partner and discuss the story’s resolution. Did they find it satisfactory? Why or why not?

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- Ask students to focus some of their attention on the transition in the story from the real world to a fantasy world, and back again to the real world.

ESL NOTE: For your ESL students you may want to have them concentrate on recording difficult, unfamiliar, or even interesting words.

Observe

- Ask individual students to read aloud portions of the text that they find challenging, assisting with prompts as needed to help them infer (refer to the *Inferring Strategy Checklist* in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*) and read fluently.

AFTER READING

Inferring

Revisit the purpose for reading

- Ask students to share their sticky note inferences with the group, using the organizer template to support their ideas. Make sure that they include inferring strategies that helped them understand Wenonah's dream. Record some of the inferences on the larger class organizer, or ask students to record one of the inferences they shared with the group on the large organizer after the session if time is limited.
- Ask students to infer and explain their thinking about why the author chose to end the story with a 'flash forward' in time. (The ending parallels the grandmother/granddaughter relationship of Pitchi and Wenonah, and it alludes to the custom and importance of storytelling through Ojibwe generations.)

Check on outstanding challenges

- Ask students to discuss any areas in the text that are still unclear so that the group can problem-solve together. Do students have an improved understanding of the references to 'Moons' in this text?

Note successful strategy use

- Highlight successful strategy use as students go over their inferences. For example, say, *I noticed that Sasha inferred that Wenonah had faith in the loon spirit's ability to restore her sight, because she continued to look out through the window into the darkness until the morning hours when she regained her sight.*

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 6 Literacy Support Guide*.

Written

- The author uses strong sensory language in this story to help the reader visualize and infer. Use the following language organizer to sort the words and phrases that give the story 'sensory feel.' Students

Inferring: Visualizing and Evaluating

should then write a paragraph that considers which sense(s) the author appeals to most often.

Sight	Smell	Sound	Touch	Taste

**Sequencing and
Synthesizing**

Artistic

- Create a comic strip of 6–8 frames, summarizing the fantasy. Students should represent the setting, characters, plot, and themes via artwork, as well as speech and thought bubbles.

Synthesizing

Oral/dramatic

- Students can participate in a Reader’s Theatre activity (see Fluency Activities in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*). With a partner, students rewrite this narrative as a script, including main characters, key events, and some of the powerful dialogue used. They should practise their lines before performing for an audience, working on fluency as they read. Students should also think about how a character might feel or express themselves as they practise reading. When ready, students perform their script.