

Sense of Place Through the Eyes of an Inuit Children's Author

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Overview: In this lesson, students will learn about Inuit culture and the environment in which they live and thrive. The students will use a literature circle approach to read several books by Michael Arvaarluck Kusugak, an Inuit who grew up at Repulse Bay in what is now Nunavut. His stories provide a simple, factual account of what life was like for a child growing up in the Arctic Circle.

Geographic Question: How does place affect life and culture?

National Standards:

- #1 How to use maps
- #4 The physical and human characteristics of places
- #15 How physical systems affect human systems

OR Geography Content Standards addressed:

- Understand and use spatial concepts of geography
- Locate places and understand and use geographic information or relationships by reading, interpreting, and preparing maps and other geographic representations
- Understand how physical characteristics in the environment affect human activities

Grade level: K-5 (adaptable)

Materials:

- Michael A. Kusugak books, including:
[My Arctic 1,2,3](#)
[Baseball Bats for Christmas](#)
[Arctic Stories](#)
- Classroom copies of outline map of Canada
- Teacher-made chart on which to compare geography and cultures of Inuit life to our own
- Paper, pencils, art supplies
- Literature circle job description template
- Scoring guide for story

Following the reading of the assigned books, the students will:

1. Locate the Arctic Circle on a map of Canada.
2. Color and label the Arctic Circle, Nunavut, and Repulse Bay.
3. Complete a chart in which Inuit life is compared to life in the U.S.
4. Write a short story from the point of view of an Inuit child.
5. Illustrate the story with correct representations of clothing, dwellings, etc.

Procedures:

1. Provide maps and globes of the region.
2. Divide class into small groups of 4-5 students. Allow each group to choose the book they will read. Assign jobs to each student (discussion director, word wizard, passage picker, summarizer, illustrator)
3. Following the reading, have each group share what they have learned with the rest of the class. Each member of the group will share what they learned in doing their specific book group jobs.
4. As a whole class, complete the chart comparing and contrasting our lives and world to that of the Inuit people.
5. Color and label maps of Canada, paying particular attention to the Arctic Circle and Nunavut. Label Repulse Bay where the author grew up and sets his stories.
6. Using information learned from the stories, ask each student to write a story from the point of view of an Inuit child. The story will describe a day in that child's life and will include facts gleaned from reading and discussion.
7. Ask each student to illustrate the story with accurate representations of clothing, dwellings, environment, etc.
8. In closing, discuss with class how our local geography influences how we live our lives—the clothes we wear, the food we eat, our forms of transportation, etc.

Assessment:

- Use a teacher/class created scoring guide to assess student understanding in their stories.
- Ask students to complete a spreadsheet showing geographic and cultural differences and similarities between the Inuit and people who live in Eastern Oregon.

Extensions:

- Establish a connection with a school in Nunavut and have Inuit pen pals.
- Do research on animals of the Arctic.
- Go ice-skating.
- Create a mural of Inuit life.
- Create a wall map of northern Canada. Label important places and geographical features, and include drawings of animals, people, etc.
- Using the end pages of Kusugak's books, have the students create Inuit designs.
- Compare the wildlife of the Arctic to that of eastern Oregon.
- Graph the changing length of days from January to December.

	Eastern Oregon	Nunavut
Houses		
Clothing		
Food		
Weather/Climate		
Transportation		
Jobs		
Games		
Pets		
Holidays		
Landscape/ (Topography)		
Vegetation		
Energy Resources		

Scoring Guide for Story Writing

Is the story told from an Inuit child's point of view?

1 2 3 4 5 6

Is there an understanding of cultural differences and similarities?

1 2 3 4 5 6

Is there a sense of place? Are there appropriate details included?

1 2 3 4 5 6

Books by Michael Arvaarluk Kusugak, illustrated by Vladyana Krykorka

A Promise is a Promise Annick Press, 1992.

ISBN 1550370081

Based on stories told by Inuit parents to their children to keep them from the dangerous practice of jumping from ice floe to ice floe.

Arctic Stories Annick Press, 1998.

ISBN 1550374532

Three stories about a little Inuit girl named Agatha and her experiences in a village above the Arctic Circle.

Baseball Bats for Christmas, Annick Press, 1993.

ISBN 1550371444

Based on a true story of a bush pilot's kindness and the unique use of Christmas trees by a group of Inuit children.

Hide and Sneak, Annick Press, 1992.

ISBN 1550372289

About a little girl who outwits a mythical Arctic creature.

My Arctic 1,2,3. Annick Press, 1996.

ISBN 1550375040

A beautiful counting book featuring Arctic wildlife.

Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails. Annick Press, 1993.

ISBN 1550373382

The story of a girl whose mother has died, and who is comforted by the unearthly beauty of the northern lights and the myth that surrounds them.

Student Roles in Literature Circles

Discussion Director: leads discussion, keeps group on task

Word Wizard: lists and defines important and unfamiliar words

Summarizer: summarizes the day's reading

Passage Picker: chooses meaningful selections to be read to the class

Illustrator: chooses an important part of the story to illustrate