

Synopsis- Learning Culture: Maggie's Ojibwa Story

Come along with us as Mrs. Watkins' fourth graders prepare for a class culture show! Maggie, a young girl from the Saginaw Chippewa tribe of Michigan, discovers her Native heritage and struggles to answer what it means to be Ojibwa in the 21st century. At first she is dismayed the inaccurate impressions of modern-day Native American life held by her teacher and classmates, and their mocking of what it means to be "Indian." Maggie quickly realizes that the appropriate corrections to their misconceptions and enlightening responses to their teasing are easier to find than she initially thought...with a little help from the students participating on the module, of course! Maggie brings your students home with her, and asks their advice as she considers her dilemma, reluctantly dragging them to a Chippewa museum when her family plans a Saturday trip to Ziibiwing in Saginaw, and excitedly shows them an Ojibwa pow wow after rediscovering her love for all things Native American.

Major Themes:

Overcoming Fears. Maggie's journey is as much about self-discovery as it is of cultural exploration. After being teased by her classmates about being "Indian," she must make a decision about the culture show--will she present her Chippewa heritage and stand out in the crowd or focus on her French great grandparents in order to fit in? Maggie engages students in making these decisions, and seeks reassurance and help with issues of bullying, internal conflict, and following your heart.

Rediscovery. Much of what Maggie "learns" about Ojibwa culture in the module is stuff she already knows, but has set aside in her mind or never really considered. A substantial portion of the module aims to get students excited about the experiences they've had and information they've learned that, given a second look, could lead to some stimulating memories and cool new ideas. Maggie's questions prompt students to recall experiences similar to the ones she's experiencing in the module, both to excavate forgotten information and to activate prior knowledge in the interest of problem-solving.

Pride. Maggie's experience with pride in the story is two-fold: early in the module she is too proud to subject herself to scrutiny at the hands of her classmates, and by the end she is bubbling with pride about her identity as a Chippewa, and the experience of researching Chippewa culture. Prompts invite students to encourage Maggie when she is too proud to try (and perhaps fail), and applaud her when she heeds their advice and takes pride in her culture.

Related 4th Grade GLCE Requirements:

R.NT.04.03 analyze characters' thoughts and motivation through dialogue, various character roles, and functions including hero, anti-hero, or narrator; know first person point of view and identify conflict and resolution.

R.CM.04.01 connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.

R.AT.04.01 be enthusiastic about reading and do substantial reading and writing on their own.

W.PS.04.01 exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message (e.g., in narrative text: strong verbs, figurative language, sensory images; in informational text: precision, established importance, transitions).

S.DS.04.01 engage in interactive, extended discourse to socially construct meaning in book clubs, literature circles, partnerships, or other conversation protocols.

L.RP.04.01 listen to or view knowledgeably and discuss a variety of genre and compare their responses to those of their peers.

Characters:

Maggie- 4th grade girl who narrates the story

Louise- Maggie's older sister, a "cool" 6th grader

Kate- Kaitlyn's twin sister (the "nice" twin) and one of Maggie's friends in the 4th grade

Kaitlyn- Kate's twin sister (the "meaner" twin) and one of Maggie's friends in the 4th grade

Josh- 4th grade classmate and friend of Maggie's

Mom- Maggie and Louise's mom who is excited by the culture show project

Aunt Marie- Maggie and Louise's aunt who is excited by the culture show project

David- Maggie and Louise's older neighbor who gives tours at the Chippewa museum

Nookomis- Maggie and Louise's grandmother who tells stories about the old days