
THE GIFT OF THE SACRED DOG

Author: Paul Goble

Publisher: Bradbury Press

THEME:

Native American cultures hold a deep, abiding respect for the earth, animals, and people, especially children, and this interrelationship affects all aspects of their lives.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

This strikingly illustrated Native American legend tells of a boy who brought the gift of horses to his people and portrays the significance of the horse to the Plains Indians. LeVar visits Crow Agency, Montana, and observes the participation of the Old Elk family in the traditional Crow Fair. Viewers have the opportunity to see how aspects of contemporary and traditional Native American life converge and to learn the Native American origins of some words in the English language along the way.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Make sure the students understand that the “sacred dogs” were really horses. Discuss the meaning of “sacred” and why the people referred to the horses as “dogs.”

Discuss how the introduction of the horse to Plains Indian cultures changed their lives.

In the program, LeVar asks, “If you could choose a new name for yourself, what would it be?” Pose this question to the students. Have them think about special talents and unique qualities they possess and incorporate those into the new name.

After watching the program, extend the students’ understanding of the powwow by sharing some of the books suggested in the “Supplementary Booklist.” Discuss the different types of dances that are traditionally performed at powwows.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Several Native American nations were mentioned in the program. Use a map to locate present day reservations. Plains Indians are featured in the story. Locate the Great Plains on the map.

Look at a state map to find names of towns, rivers, lakes, and other geographic features that have Indian names. Perhaps the name of the state is an Indian word. Inquire at the public library for a resource that tells the origins and meanings of these place names.

Have students ask their parents how they selected the names of their children. Who named them? Were they named for someone? Share this information in class. Enlist the aid of the school library media specialist in helping the students find what their names mean. Both print and Internet resources will be useful. Give students a strip of construction paper that is cut 9 x 3 inches and instruct them to fold it in three equal parts. On the top fold, have them write their first name. Open that fold to reveal the second fold, and have them draw a picture of what their name means in that section. Then, open the second fold to reveal the third part (which is actually the center part of the three), and have them write the meaning of their name on that part.

In a large space, have students move their feet and bodies according to the way the powwow music makes them feel. Explain that their movements are a response to the rhythms of the drum and the singing, rather than a traditional dance.

With the help of adult volunteers, make Indian Fry Bread in the classroom, according to the following recipe:

Ingredients:

2 c. flour	2 Tbsp. shortening
2 tsp. baking powder	½ c. cold water
½ tsp salt	oil for frying
½ c. nonfat dry milk	

Directions: Mix the flour, baking powder, salt, and dry milk in a mixing bowl. Add the shortening and mix it into the flour mixture until it is crumbly. Add the water and toss the ingredients with a fork until the dough forms a ball. Put a cloth over the bowl and let the dough rest at room temperature for about two hours. Cut the dough into three equal pieces. On a lightly floured surface, roll each piece into a circle about 8 inches across and ¼ inch thick. Cut two parallel slits (about 4 inches long) about one inch apart through each circle. Put about one inch of cooking oil in a heavy skillet and heat it over medium heat until it is very hot, but not smoking. Fry the circles, one at a time, for about two minutes on each side. The bread will puff a bit and turn brown and crispy. Drain the circles on a paper towel and eat while they are warm.

Gather additional folktales and legends by Paul Goble to share with the class. Note the details in his illustrations. Discuss the reverence for animals that the Native Americans in his stories possess.

Invite a Native American storyteller to the classroom to tell stories and talk about the characteristics of traditional legends. Perhaps someone who has danced at a powwow could come into the classroom and give a demonstration. A state or local Native American cultural center or agency or the anthropology department at a university might be able to suggest resource persons.

As a class, listen to some powwow music (check a local music store for recordings). Have students listen to the way the voices of the singers match the beating of the drum. Then have them use rhythm instruments, such as sticks and blocks of wood, or even pencils tapping a book to reproduce the beating of the drum as they listen.

RELATED THEMES:

United States history
specific Native American cultures

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #73 — The Legend Of The Indian Paintbrush
Program #129 — Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message
Program #99 — And Still The Turtle Watched

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Born and educated in England, Paul Goble has long been fascinated by American Indians. His parents were artists and musicians, and as a result, Paul enjoyed art and drawing as a child. In addition to studying art, he studied Native American history and lore. Before moving to Nebraska in 1977, Paul visited the United States many times, traveling in the Great Plains region and becoming acquainted with people living on the reservations. His attention to the details of the natural settings of his stories and to the traditions of native peoples in his illustrations earned him a Caldecott Medal for *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*. He states that he is trying to tell his stories "from within Plains Indian culture...to capture the spirit of the story and the people." Paul Goble lives with his wife and son in Lincoln, Nebraska.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

MOONSONG LULLABY
by Jamake Highwater, photos by Marcia Keegan (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard)

SUHO AND THE WHITE HORSE
retold by Yuzo Otsuka, illus. by Suekichi Akaba (Viking)

WHY MOSQUITOES BUZZ IN PEOPLE'S EARS
by Verna Aardema, illus. by Leo & Diane Dillon (Dial)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

POWWOW
by George Ancona (Harcourt Brace)

SPOTTED EAGLE AND BLACK CROW: A LAKOTA LEGEND
by Emery Bernhard, illus. by Durga Bernhard (Holiday House)

DRUMBEAT...HEARTBEAT: A CELEBRATION OF THE POWWOW
by Susan Braine (Lerner)

POWWOW
by Linda Coombs, illus. by Carson Waterman (Simon & Schuster)

EAGLE DRUM: ON THE POWWOW TRAIL WITH A YOUNG GRASS
DANCER
by Robert Crum (Four Winds)

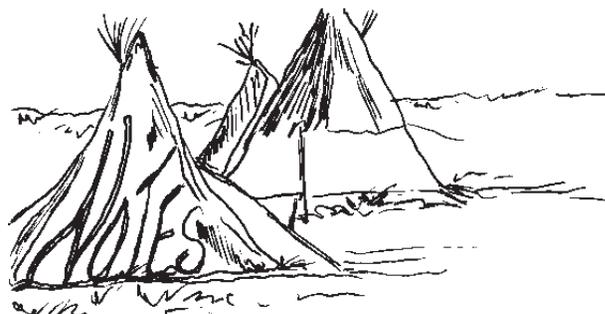
BRAVE BEAR AND THE GHOSTS: A SIOUX LEGEND
by Gloria Dominic, illus. by Charles Reasoner (Rourke)

THE GIRL WHO LOVED WILD HORSES
by Paul Goble (Bradbury)

BUFFALO WOMAN
by Paul Goble (Bradbury)

CELEBRATING THE POWWOW
by Bobbie Kalman (Crabtree)

SKY DOGS
by Jane Yolen, illus. by Barry Moser (Harcourt Brace)



Without giving too much away, the "Sacred Dog" is a horse. Although horses evolved in North America, they went extinct by the time the Native American tribes appeared. When the first Spanish The Gift of the Sacred Dog by Paul Goble is one of those very rare children's books that will also appeal to adults, especially those interested in Native Americans, world mythology, ecology and horses. That's probably why it was one of the books featured on the late-lamented PBS series Reading Rainbow.Â This writer used to proudly own a hardback first edition of "The Gift of the Sacred Dog". Although I was stupid enough to lose it, I remember the book vividly. Although it has been many years since I last held the physical copy of the book, I can still remember the story.