NBE3U Writing Back, Lesson 6

Big Red Apples

Zitkála-Šá and the promise of the East



Apples



Iron horse



A child



A writer

Today's goals

We are learning…

- To make inferences about a narrator who knows more than her younger self.
- To write with a distinctive voice.

I can…

- Read a historical passage fluently, understanding most words.
- Make inferences about the mother's warning.
- Explain the gap between the child and the adult narrator.
- Write a short scene in my own voice.

Today's plan

Time	What we're doing	You will…
0–8 min	**Hook**	Discuss
8–15 min	**Zitkála-Šá**	Note
15–35 min	**Read**	Read aloud
35–55 min	**Two narrators**	Analyse
55–75 min	**Write**	Write

Warm-up



Think of an ad that promised something wonderful. What did it promise, and what did you actually get?

Sentence starters

“It promised… but…”

“I believed it because…”

“Looking back, the clue was…”

How it works

- Pairs: 3 minutes.
- Keep it light.

Big idea

In “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (1900), Zitkála-Šá remembers being eight years old and wanting red apples and a ride on the “iron horse.” The child believes the missionaries; the adult writer knows what came next. The gap between the two narrators is where the reader learns the truth.

Zitkála-Šá (Red Bird)

Yankton Dakota, 1876

Born on the Yankton reservation in Dakota Territory; raised by her mother.

A boarding school at eight

Taken to a Quaker missionary school in Wabash, Indiana.

The Atlantic Monthly, 1900

Three essays about her childhood, schooling and teaching.

An activist

Co-founded the National Council of American Indians (1926); died in 1938.

The first turning

The first turning away from the easy, natural flow of my life occurred in an early spring. It was in my eighth year; in the month of March, I afterward learned. At this age I knew but one language, and that was my mother’s native tongue.

Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (Atlantic Monthly, 1900), American Indian Stories (1921). Public domain.

Think about it

How old is she?

What is the “easy, natural flow”?

What does “turning away” predict?

Partner reading

In pairs, with the Reader:

1. Take turns reading one paragraph aloud.
2. Read period words as written; skip slurs with “[skip].”
3. Listener: note one word that slowed the reader.
4. Together, explain that word from context.

The warning

With a sad, slow smile, she answered: “There! I knew you were wishing to go, because Judewin has filled your ears with the white man’s lies. Don’t believe a word they say! Their words are sweet, but, my child, their deeds are bitter. You will cry for me, but they will not even soothe you. Stay with me, my little one! Your brother Dawee says that going East, away from your mother, is too hard an experience for his baby sister.”

Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (Atlantic Monthly, 1900), American Indian Stories (1921). Public domain.

Think about it

What does the mother know?

What does “sweet” vs “bitter” mean?

Why doesn't the child listen?

The promise

The interpreter heard me, and answered: “Yes, little girl, the nice red apples are for those who pick them; and you will have a ride on the iron horse if you go with these good people.”

I had never seen a train, and he knew it.

Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (Atlantic Monthly, 1900), American Indian Stories (1921). Public domain.

Think about it

Who is speaking in each paragraph?

What does the second paragraph reveal?

Whose judgment is it?

Two narrators, one story

child narrator	The younger self, in the moment. *“I like big red apples.”*
adult narrator	The writer looking back. *“I had never seen a train, and he knew it.”*
dramatic irony	Readers know what a character doesn't. *We know the East is not Wonderland.*

The decision

“Yes, Dawee, my daughter, though she does not understand what it all means, is anxious to go. She will need an education when she is grown, for then there will be fewer real Dakotas, and many more palefaces. This tearing her away, so young, from her mother is necessary, if I would have her an educated woman. The palefaces, who owe us a large debt for stolen lands, have begun to pay a tardy justice in offering some education to our children. But I know my daughter must suffer keenly in this experiment. […]

Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (Atlantic Monthly, 1900), American Indian Stories (1921). Public domain.

Think about it

Why does the mother say yes?

What does “a tardy justice” mean?

What does she fear?

Read between the narrators

On page 1, in pairs:

1. For each moment, note what the child believes.
2. Infer what the adult writer knows.
3. Find the sentence where the adult steps in.
4. Explain why the mother says yes.

Write in your voice

On page 2:

1. Choose a promise from your life, or invent one.
2. Show what your younger self believed.
3. Add one detail that shows the truth.
4. Use one short sentence for the turning point.

Exit ticket

1. The child's belief in one sentence.

2. The adult's knowledge in one sentence.

3. Why does the mother say yes?

Next class: The Land of Red Apples.

Teacher reveal

Big red apples: key points

The promise: Red apples and a ride on the “iron horse”: what an eight-year-old wants.

The interpreter: “I had never seen a train, and he knew it.” The adult writer exposes the trick.

The mother's warning: “Their words are sweet, but, my child, their deeds are bitter.” She knows; the child doesn't.

The mother's decision: She lets her go for an education, knowing her daughter “must suffer keenly in this experiment.”

Two narrators: The child's wonder and the adult's knowledge sit side by side: dramatic irony.

Voice: Short sentences at the turning points; the child's words in quotation marks; the adult's judgment in plain statements.