The Land of Red Apples: Being looked at, and the cutting of hair

NBE3U, Unit 3: Writing Back, Lesson 7. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

On the train east, Zitkála-Šá is stared at; at the school, she is handled like a toy and her braids are cut. She writes for the same kind of readers who stared, and turns their gaze back on them. Sensory detail lets readers feel what attitudes and rules did to one child.

What students do: Students prepare for difficult content, read “The Land of Red Apples” and “The Cutting of My Long Hair,” analyse who is watching whom, chart sensory imagery, infer the attitudes behind the school's rules, and connect the account to residential schools in Canada with care.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
C1.5	extend their understanding of texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, by making rich connections between the ideas in them and in other texts and to their own knowledge, experience, and insights
C2.3	identify a variety of elements of style in texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, in relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, and explain, with increasing insight, how they help communicate meaning or reflect a world view and enhance the effectiveness of the text
A2.3	make inferences of increasing subtlety about attitudes towards First Nations, Métis, and Inuit content in various contemporary and historical text forms, providing explanations that draw on a range of appropriate evidence to support their opinions

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies (2019), English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, Grade 11, University Preparation (NBE3U). A = First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada, B = Oral Communication, C = Reading and Literature Studies, D = Writing, E = Media Studies.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning to analyse how sensory detail communicates experience. • We are learning to make careful connections between texts and history.	• I can explain who is watching whom in the passages. • I can analyse sensory imagery and its effect. • I can infer the attitudes behind the school's actions. • I can connect the text to other texts and to history, with care.

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Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** The Land of Red Apples deck.
- **Handouts:** Who Is Watching? (page 1), Connection Web (page 2).
- **Reader:** Zitkála-Šá, “The Land of Red Apples” and “The Cutting of My Long Hair.”

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Care**	Before we read.	Listen.	
8–25	**The train**	Being watched.	Read and analyse.	Gaze reversed.
25–45	**The school**	Sensory imagery.	Chart.	Effects explained.
45–60	**The hair**	Attitudes.	Infer.	Attitudes inferred.
60–75	**Connections**	Texts and history.	Connect.	Careful connections.

Differentiation

- **Support:** Imagery chart with senses labelled and one example each.
- **ELL:** Pre-teach shingled, indignities, scrutinized, whitewashed.
- **Challenge:** Compare with the mission school passage in Johnson's story (Lesson 5).

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Imagery chart and Connection Web	Connections (C1.5), style (C2.3) and inferences about attitudes (A2.3)

The land of red apples: key points

- **Being watched:** On the train, white passengers stare and point; she reports their “rude curiosity” and turns the gaze back on them.
- **Sensory imagery:** Glaring light, hard shoes on bare floors, whirring ears: the school as an assault on the senses.
- **Being handled:** Tossed in the air “like a wooden puppet”: kindness that treats her as a toy, not a person.
- **The hair:** Among her people, shingled hair meant a captured coward; cutting it was a deep humiliation.
- **Attitude inferred:** The school saw Dakota culture as something to remove, and the children as many “little animals driven by a herder.”
- **Connection:** Survivors of Canadian residential schools describe the same practice; the TRC recorded such testimony.

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Teacher notes

- Before reading, name the content (boarding and residential schools, separation from family, loss) and remind students they may step out, pass, or talk privately. This course discusses colonization, residential schools and their effects. Some students and families carry this history personally. Support: Hope for Wellness Help Line (for Indigenous people across Canada, 24/7, by phone or online chat at hopeforwellness.ca; English and French, with Cree, Ojibway and Inuktut on request at certain times), 1-855-242-3310; Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868; 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline (call or text 988); National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419.
- In Zitkála-Šá's account, her mothers had taught that short hair was worn by mourners and shingled (cut) hair by captured cowards. Survivors of Canada's residential schools have also described having their hair cut on arrival. Present this as testimony from texts and survivors' records, not as something to discuss through students' own families.
- Zitkála-Šá (Yankton Dakota) and Charles Eastman (Santee Dakota) wrote in the United States. Dakota homelands cross today's border, and Eastman spent his boyhood in exile in Manitoba after the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862. Their accounts of U.S. boarding schools are context for, not the same as, Canada's residential school system.
- Do not ask Indigenous students to speak for their communities, to share personal or family histories, or to act as experts. Every student's participation in sharing is optional.
- Historical texts use the words of their time, including terms now considered offensive (for example, “Red-skin,” “savage,” “squaw,” “half-breed,” “Eskimo”). We quote accurately when analysing, explain why these terms are harmful, and use today's terms (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous, or the specific Nation) in our own words. Readers may say “[skip]” instead of reading a slur aloud.

Coming up

Lesson 8, The Civilizing Machine.

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