

TEACHER RESOURCE KIT INDEX CARD

Native Drums Website: Poetry

Poem About the Drum; Poem About the Flute

Key Concepts:

First Peoples' Cultures / Poetry / Poem About the Drum / Poem About the Flute (Based on a modern Iroquoian myth about the flute) / Poets are from Mohawk & Saddle Lake (Cree) First Nations

Summary of Teacher Resource Kit:

*This Teacher Resource Kit focuses on two incredible, exciting poems: **Elderberry Flute Song** by Peter Blue Cloud and **A Poem (About the Drum)** by Lana Whiskeyjack. It includes copies of the poems, questions & class exercises, and a 'Poetry Brainstorming' guide to help students in their exploration of poetry.*

Materials in Teacher Resource Kit

- *Part 1: Poems + Questions/Class Exercises + Poetry Brainstorming Guide*
- *Part 2: Poems by Themselves*

Subject & Grade Areas: *Secondary: English / Native Studies / Music*

**Native Drums Website
Teacher Resource Kit:**

Poems About the Drum or Flute

(List of Educational Materials)

1. Elderberry Flute Song by Peter Blue Cloud (Iroquoian)

(Poem + Questions for Students)

2. Elderberry Flute Song by Peter Blue Cloud (Iroquoian)

(Poem + Questions To Do As A Class #2)

3. Poem by Lana Whiskeyjack About the Drum (Cree)

(Poem + Questions for Students)

4. Poetry Brainstorming Circles

(Handout: Brainstorming Tool for Students; Understanding the Poem)

5. Folder: Copies of the Three Poems by Themselves

(Elderberry Flute Song (*Iroquoian*), Poem by Lana Whiskeyjack About the Drum (*Cree*))

Poem by Peter Blue Cloud (in Conlon 1983: 12)
Excerpt from "Mythology and Symbols", Native Drums Website

This is a modern Iroquoian myth about the flute. It is a poem by Peter Blue Cloud (in Conlon 1983: 12). Peter Blue Cloud (Turtle Clan) is a Mohawk from Kahnawake, Quebec.

Elderberry Flute Song

He raised the flute to his lips
sweetened by springtime
and slowly played a note
which hung for many seasons
above Creation.
And creation was content
in the knowledge of music.
Then note followed note
in a melody which wove
the fabric of first life.
The sun gave warmth to waiting seedlings,
and thus were born
the vast multitudes
from the song
of the flute.

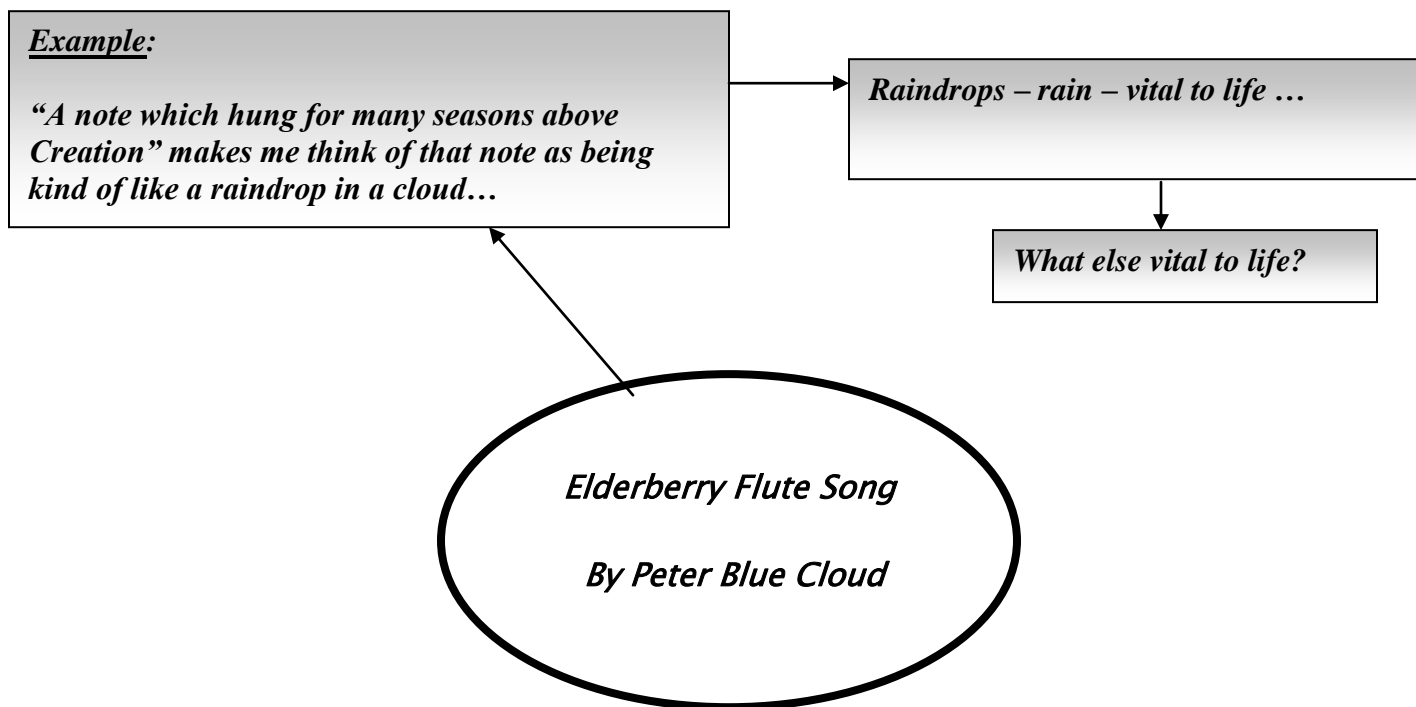
Exercise

1. Enjoy this poem: Read it over several times to feel the words.
2. Complete the 'Brainstorming Circle' on the next page. Don't worry about grammar, spelling or the 'correct' ways of writing while brainstorming. The purpose here is to get your thoughts and ideas flowing. Use the ideas that you come up with here to answer the questions below.

Brainstorming Circle

Instructions:

Brainstorm about Peter Blue Cloud's 'Elderberry Flute Song'. What really struck you? What did you like? What questions do you still have after having read it? How did the poem make you feel? Go ahead and get messy! Don't worry about grammar, spelling or the 'correct' ways of writing while brainstorming. The purpose here is to get your thoughts and ideas about the poem flowing. Use the ideas that you come up with here to answer the questions below.



Questions:

1. Describe in your own words what is taking place in this poem.
2. What is the overall tone (feeling) of this poem?
3. How does the poet create this tone? Discuss the imagery used.
4. What connects the flute player to the rest of creation? Explain
5. The poet writes, "Then note followed note in a melody which wove the fabric of first life". Discuss this metaphor: What is music being likened to here?
6. Did you like this poem? Explain why or why not.

***For Alternative/Supplementary Class Exercise to the 'Elderberry Flute Song' poem, see 'Elderberry Flute Song + Questions (2)' document.**

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Elderberry Flute Song

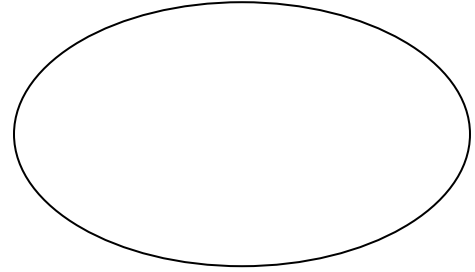
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The sun gave warmth to waiting seedlings,
and thus were born
the vast multitudes
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of the flute.

Class Exercise:

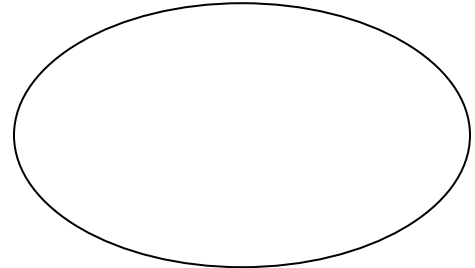
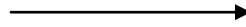
1. Hook: Read the poem once to the class.
2. Next, reread each section of the poem individually. Immediately after reading a section, have students respond to it. They may respond with a question, a description of what they are feeling, an opinion/interpretation, or something else along these lines. (*See below for sections.) The point here is to compel students toward a very deliberate consideration of the poem
3. At the end of this exercise, discuss the poem as a class by asking students to share their responses.

**Responding to Elderberry Flute Song
A Poem By Peter Blue Cloud**

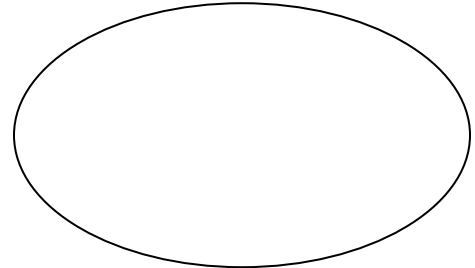
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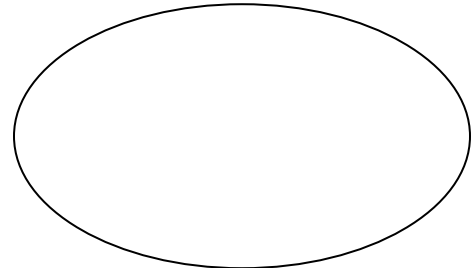
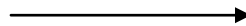
And creation was content
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Then note followed note
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The sun gave warmth to waiting
seedlings,
and thus were born
the vast multitudes
from the song
of the flute.



***For Alternative/Supplementary Class Exercise to the 'Elderberry Flute Song' poem, see 'Elderberry Flute Song + Questions (1)' document.**

Poem by Lana Whiskeyjack, Saddle Lake First Nations (2004)

Lana Whiskeyjack, Writer, "Mythology and Symbols", Native Drums Website

Poem by Lana Whiskeyjack

The first drumbeat sang me back to sleep.
In dreams I danced to a harmonious pulse.
Familiar voices tickled my skin.
"Wan'ska" they whispered.

I awoke with a sigh
surrounded by reflecting light
and cried.
Mother held me tight
the drumbeat still there.
I closed my eyes without a care.

Nohkom gently smiled,
"A-how nitanis nimihito!"
"dance my girl!"
I danced.
I flew.
There was nothing I couldn't do.
In an instant it was gone.
Not knowing where, how, or why it went wrong.
I lived in silence,
waiting, restless and unaware.

Then one day from an eagle's eye view
meandering confused in a concrete web.
Stuck in a crevice of books, words and menace
I wept.
I yelled
and prayed.
Then there was silence.

In the unspoken chaos I heard the drum,

familiar voices and tender tones.
I shuffled between doubt and happiness.
Each song I danced.
Drained and exhausted
the beat grew louder.
Slowly I felt sinew coiling me,
inside and out,
then tighter.
A final yank,
a pull from my heart
bonded to a circle of love, kindness, wisdom and laughter.

Ay-ay.

[Translation of the Cree words in the poem. Wanska – wake up; Nohkom – my grandmother; A-how – an expression to get attention; Nitanis – my daughter; Nimihito – dance; and ay-ay – thank you with the greatest respect.]

Questions:

1. Enjoy this poem: Read it over several times and feel the words.
2. Find where the poet refers to drums and dancing in the first half of the poem. How does the sound of the drum make her feel? Use examples from the poem to support your answer.
3. When the poet says, “In an instant it was gone”, what is she referring to?
4. How does she feel when silence replaces the music of the drum?
5. The poet refers to the silence as “unspoken chaos”. Discuss the possible reasons why. (i.e. The absence of the drum implies the absence of what else?)
6. When she finally hears the drum once again, what is she hearing?

7. What does the drum ultimately bond her to?
 8. The drum is obviously much more than just a musical instrument. What else is it? Use examples from the poem to explain.
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Advanced Grades:

9. Discuss the use of metaphor in this last part of the poem:

Slowly I felt sinew coiling me,
inside and out,
then tighter.
A final yank,
a pull from my heart
bonded to a circle of love, kindness, wisdom and laughter.

Suggestions to help you explore this question:

- Look up the word 'sinew' and write down all possible meanings.
 - Consider the materials used to make certain types of drum.
 - How are the drum and the poet connected? What type of imagery is used to emphasize this connection?
 - The drum is obviously much more than just a musical instrument. What else is it? Refer to examples from the poem.
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Extension: Class Discussion

This poem provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the importance of culture. How do people draw strength from their culture? What happens when people are denied/separated from their culture? Think of current examples and discuss.

Poetry Brainstorming Circle(s)

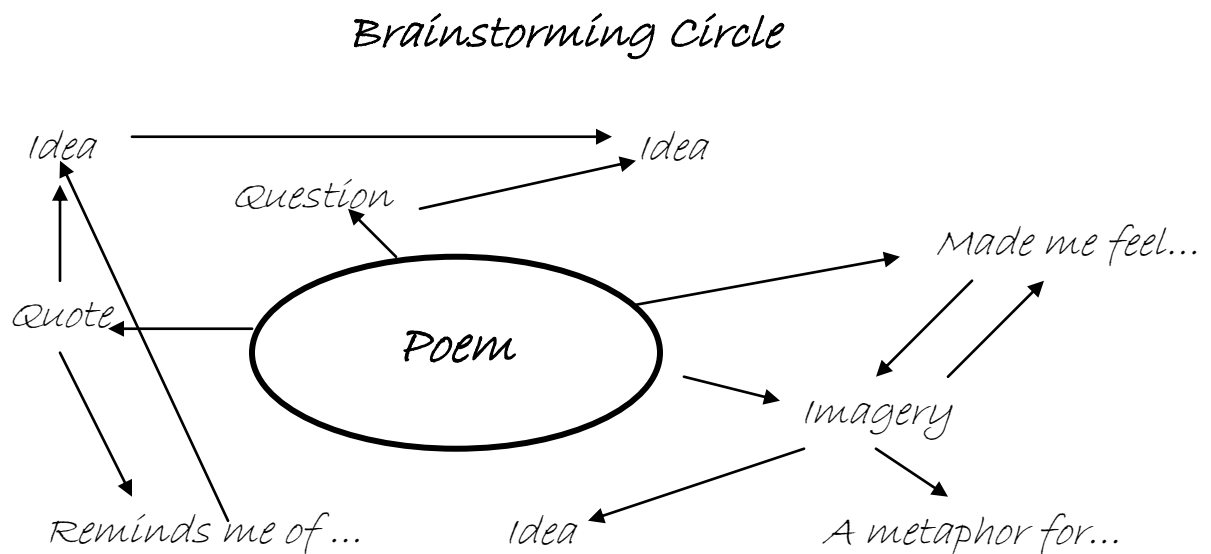
We know that you have excellent, exciting, interesting ideas. Everyone does. Sometimes however, it's just a bit hard to get started.

A 'Poetry Brainstorming Circle' can help to unglue thoughts and get them flowing. It involves writing your main point of focus in a circle and branching out from there. When using a brainstorming circle, don't worry about grammar, spelling or the 'correct' way of wording things! Just go ahead and get messy, writing whatever comes to mind! You can worry about spelling later.

To help get you started, ask yourself some basic questions. What really struck you? What did you like? What didn't you like? What questions do you still have? How did the poem make you feel? Did it remind you of any experiences that you've ever had? What was your favourite line and why? Remember, the purpose here is to get your thoughts and ideas flowing.

You can have as many brainstorming circles about a poem as you like. Have one for the whole poem. Have one for the title. Have one for the first line. Have one for the last line. Do whatever works best for you.

And of course, remember to enjoy!



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