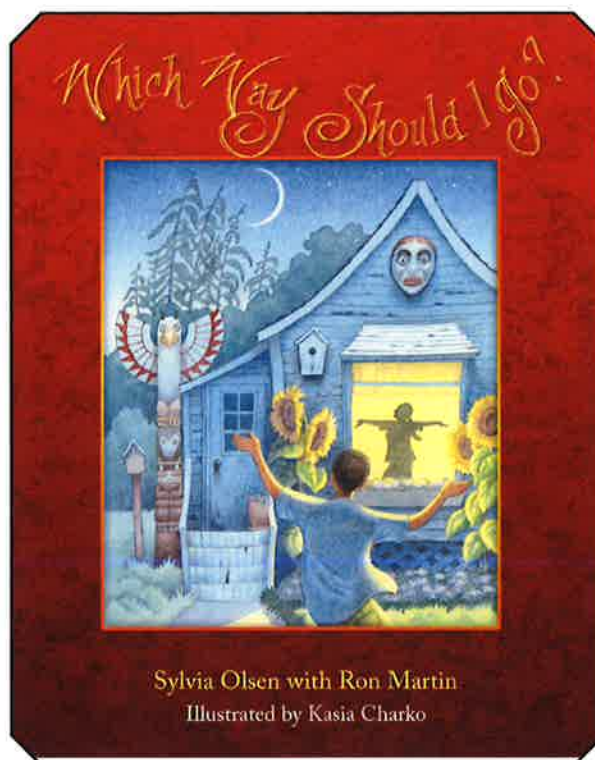


# Teachers' Guide



## **Which Way Should I Go?**

Sylvia Olsen with Ron Martin

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## BACKGROUND

### How to Use this Guide

This guide for teachers includes many ideas for ways to share *Which Way Should I Go?* with students. Read through all the sections and then choose one or more activities that you feel reflect your interests and the needs and interests of your students. Sometimes one activity is best done before (or after) another – read ahead and plan your lessons so you don't spoil any surprises or miss any background information. Have fun!

### Story Synopsis

Joey and his grandmother have a special way of doing things. With a song and a dance, they meet the choices they face each day with joy. Should Joey eat applesauce with cinnamon or ice cream? Should he go to soccer practice or stay inside? There's always something to choose, and a fun way to choose it. Well... almost always. When Joey's grandmother dies he can't imagine what kind of choice he's been given in the matter. Angry and sad, Joey needs some time before he finds a way to embrace his grandmother's lesson (and her song and dance) once again.

### The Story Behind the Story

Sylvia Olsen's friend, Ron Martin, grew up hearing the stories of his family and community. Ron's father, Robert, was a hereditary chief (Ha'withl) of the Tla-o-qui-aht (formerly known as Clayoquot), one of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations. When Ron and his brothers and sisters visited their grandparents, they often sang and danced along with the song Joey's grandmother sings in *Which Way Should I Go?* As Ron explains, this song reminds us that the way we react to everything in life is a choice. In every waking moment of our lives, we should be aware that we have chosen whatever we are doing or thinking. That is why we sing and dance and pause, to ask ourselves, "Which way should I go?" We can stay in bed or we can get up. We can listen or not listen. We can be angry or not angry. Everything is a choice.

Sylvia Olsen loves Ron's stories. Sylvia wanted to share this song and story with many children. Sylvia and Ron worked on this project together. The result is a story that captures the essence of the teachings that have been passed from generation to generation in the Tla-o-qui-aht culture. Visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89IOGqfjESU> to hear Sylvia singing the *Which Way* song.

### The Author

Sylvia Olsen was born and brought up in Victoria, B.C. She married into the Tsartlip First Nation when she was seventeen, and for more than thirty years she has lived and

worked and raised her four children in the Tsartlip community. She returned to school at age thirty-five and earned a master's degree in history, specializing in Native/white relations in Canada.

First and foremost, Sylvia Olsen is a storyteller. Since childhood she has loved to tell and listen to stories. But stories in books didn't fascinate her as much as stories told in person, so it wasn't until Sylvia was over forty years old that she thought about writing. Now she writes every day and has published many books, mostly novels for young people.

### The Storyteller

Ron Martin is the eighth child of Robert Martin Sr. and Cecelia Martin (née Lucas) of Opitsaht. Opitsaht, the ancestral home of the Martin family, is situated on Meares Island, across from Tofino, B.C.

Ron's father recognized that Ron, his second youngest son, had a good memory and so he passed on to him the details of the family's history and teachings. All Ron's life he has been a student of these teachings. He now lives and works in Hesquiaht, B.C., the ancestral home of his mother. He has one daughter, Courtney, and many nieces and nephews. He actively passes on teachings and Tla-o-qui-aht history to younger generations, including his daughter, Courtney - from whom he can trace back twenty-six generations. In keeping the history alive, he has earned the respect and honour of his family and his community.

### The Illustrator

Kasia Charko is originally from England, where she had an illustrious career in advertising, magazine work and fashion illustration. She now lives outside Toronto and has worked in Canadian advertising and, more recently, book illustration. Children's books are her favourite work. *Which Way Should I Go?* is the eleventh picture book Kasia has illustrated.

## TALKING ABOUT THE STORY

### Make Predictions

Look at the cover of *Which Way Should I Go?* Before reading the story, ask students what they think the book is about. Here are a few questions to get the conversation started:

What do you think the book is about?

Who are the characters on the cover?

Who is the main character?

What time of year does this story take place?

How do the two people on the cover know each other?

Do you think this image comes from the beginning, middle, or end of the story? Why?

**Listen Carefully**

Read *Which Way Should I Go?* aloud without showing the pictures or the cover to students. Ask the students what they imagine Joey, his mother, grandmother, and teacher look like. Have the students imagine the store, Grandma's house, and the beach. Read the story a second time, showing the illustrations. Ask the students how the images in their imaginations were the same as or different from the artwork created by Kasia Charko.

**STORY ELEMENTS****Questions and Activities for Basic Comprehension****Think While You Read**

As you read the story, stop to discuss some of the following points with students:

- At the beginning of the story, why is Joey a happy boy?
- Why is Joey's grandmother his favourite person in the world?
- How does Joey's grandmother help him make choices?
- How did Simon try to cheer Joey up after his grandmother died?
- How do you know how bad Joey feels after Grandma dies?
- How did Grandma's song help Joey feel better?

*Try This*

Make up a melody and sing Grandma's song. What kind of dance steps would go along with the song? Divide students into small groups and have them practice their versions of the song and dance featured in the story. Students can perform their dances for the rest of the class.

**Look at the Plot**

Every good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Many stories also have some kind of problem or challenge the main character must face and overcome. What challenge does Joey face? Does he overcome his problem by the end of the book? How can you tell?

Create a timeline for the story of *Which Way Should I Go?* Emphasize the key events and make drawings of the most important ones.

**Look at Characters**

In what ways does Joey change over the course of the book? There are several secondary characters in the book. How does each character try to help Joey? In the end, which character is the most helpful?

**Look at the Setting**

Remind students that setting is made up of the place and time where the story happens.

Kasia Charko's illustrations provide many clues about the setting of *Which Way Should I Go?* Where does this story take place? When does this story happen? Describe the community where Joey and his family live. Describe Grandma's house, both inside and out.

**Consider Theme**

What are the major themes in *Which Way Should I Go?*

**MAKING STUDENT CONNECTIONS**

Every day we each add to our own life stories. When we read, sometimes something in the book reminds us of something that happened in our own lives. Does a picture, part of the story, character or feeling in *Which Way Should I Go?* remind you of something from your own life? Write that idea down and illustrate it.

Does *Which Way Should I Go?* remind you of something that has happened to someone else?

Has anyone ever given you some ideas about how to feel better when you get sad or angry? Do these suggestions help?

When you feel sad or angry, what do you do, think, or say to help make yourself feel better? Is this something that someone else helped you discover or did you figure it out on your own?

Does this story about a boy who is sad and angry remind you of a time when you felt sad or angry?

Do you find it difficult to make choices? Do you think it's possible to choose how you feel? Why or why not? Are some choices easier to make than others?

Does Joey remind you of someone you know? Who? Why?

Does Joey's teacher remind you of someone you know? Who? Why?

Do you have a favourite snack that you like to share with someone in your family?

Do you have a favourite game that you like to play with your best friend?

### Imagine This, Imagine That!

Imagine you have come across Joey sitting by himself in the forest. What would you do to try to cheer him up?

Imagine that you are going to the store in Joey's village. Try to imagine every detail of what it would be like to go into the store. What will you buy? Who is with you? What do you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste when you are in the store? Is anyone else shopping? What are they buying? Do you choose paper or plastic bags or did you bring a bag from home? What does the man who owns the store say to you?

### Great Words

Each student should choose a favourite word from *Which Way Should I Go?* What colour does this word remind you of? Should it be written large and bold? Tiny and pale? Straight? Crooked? Write the word on a 4 X 5 inch index card. Use coloured pens, pencils, or crayons to write the word. Decorate the card and the word. Display all the word cards on a bulletin board. After the display is taken down, students may wish to glue their word into their writing journals.

### Study the Artwork

Each student should select another picture book from the library. Students should divide a page in half lengthwise and write Kasia Charko at the top of one side of the page and the other illustrator's name at the top of the other side. Have students compare the two illustrators' use of colour, texture, shape, perspective, materials, line, space, and general style and approach to their work.

Have the students choose a part of the text in *Which Way Should I Go?* and create their own illustrations. Students may also choose to create a new cover for the story.

### Scavenger Hunt

Find the following in the illustrations in *Which Way Should I Go?*

- Braided rug
- Crescent moon
- Pink eraser
- Red dog collar
- Driftwood
- Dandelion
- Cup of coffee
- TV set
- Birdhouses
- Ketchup bottle

Black cat  
Ice cream  
Basket of yarn  
Ferns  
Vegetable garden  
Hanging basket with red flowers  
Red dragon

### **MAKE INFERENCES**

Based on information contained in the text and illustrations, readers can make inferences about details not necessarily revealed in the book. Use these questions to generate discussion about aspects of the story and characters that are not revealed directly.

How long do you think Joey will wait before he teaches his friends Grandma's song and dance?  
Do you think Joey's mother also knows the song and dance?  
How do you think Joey's teacher feels when Joey is sad in class?  
Where do you think Grandma learned the song and dance she teaches to Joey?  
Do you think Mr. Smith sells fishing gear at his store?  
What grade is Joey in?

### **PUT IT ALL TOGETHER**

Ask students what they have learned from what Joey's grandmother thinks are the important lessons for her grandson to learn. What are the similarities and differences between the things a teacher, a grandparent, or a parent might teach a child? What message do you think Sylvia Olsen hopes to share with readers?

### **NEW VOCABULARY**

-discouraged  
-seldom  
-cozy  
-subtracting  
-served

### **OTHER PICTURE BOOKS BY SYLVIA OLSEN**

*Yetsa's Sweater* Illustrated by Joan Larson (Sono Nis Press)

## **OTHER BOOKS AND RESOURCES ABOUT LOSS AND GRIEF**

*Waiting for the Whales* by Sheryl McFarlane

*The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* by Judith Viorst

*When Dinosaurs Die* by Laurie Krasny Brown

*I Miss You* by Pat Thomas

*When Your Grandparent Dies: A Child's Guide to Good Grief* by Victoria Ryan

*Tear Soup* by Pat Schweibert

*The Saddest Time* by Norma Simon

*Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing With Loss*

by Michaelene Mundy

*Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for Helping Kids Cope When a Special Person Dies*

by Janis Silverman

*The Fall of Freddy the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages* by Leo Buscaglia

## **HOST AN AUTHOR VISIT**

Sylvia Olsen and Ron Martin love to visit with students to talk about where stories come from and how they are shared. Contact Sono Nis Press at [books@sononis.com](mailto:books@sononis.com) to learn more about inviting Sylvia and Ron to speak at your school. More information about Sylvia Olsen can be found at her website, [sylviaolsen.ca](http://sylviaolsen.ca)

## **USEFUL BOOKS FOR TEACHERS**

*Reading Power: Teaching Students to Think While They Read* by Adrienne Gear

*Literature is Back! Using the Best Books for Teaching Readers and Writers*

*Across Genres* by Carol J. Fuhler and Maria P. Walther