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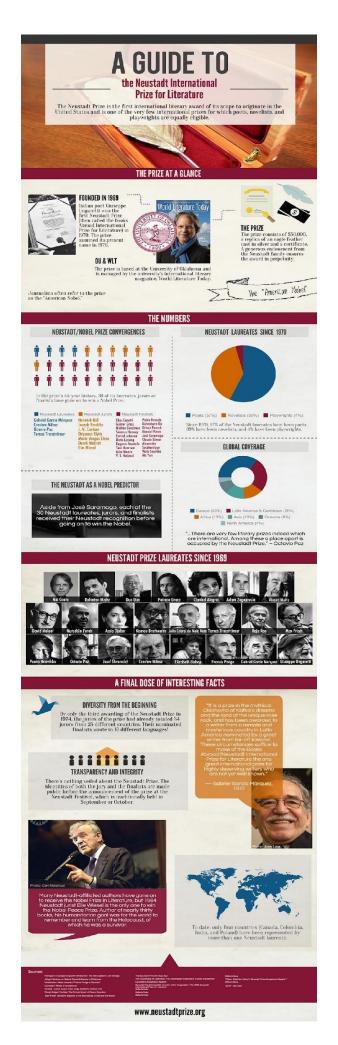
COLORADO ACADEMY

2021 NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature Lesson plans to study the work of the 2021 NSK Laureate



Cynthia Leitich Smith

Developed by Lindsay Beatty, Jon Vogels, & Tom Thorpe Colorado Academy Library & English Department © 2021 Colorado Academy



<u>About the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's</u> <u>Literature:</u>

Since 2003, the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature has been awarded every other year to a living writer or author-illustrator with significant achievement in children's or young-adult literature. Made possible through the generosity of Nancy Barcelo, Susan Neustadt Schwartz, and Kathy Neustadt and sponsored by *World Literature Today*, the University of Oklahoma's award-winning magazine of international literature, the NSK Prize celebrates literature that contributes to the quality of children's lives. Candidates for the award are nominated by a jury of children's literature writers, illustrators, or scholars, and the jury also selects the winner of each biennial prize.

Laureates of the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature receive a check for \$35,000, a silver medallion, and a certificate at a public ceremony at the University of Oklahoma and are featured in a subsequent issue of *World Literature Today*.

<u>The Neustadt/NSK Scholar Program at Colorado</u> <u>Academy:</u>

Colorado Academy hosts an annual writing competition for Upper School students, whereby winners are selected through a process of positive elimination, modeled after the Jury deliberation process for the Neustadt prizes. Members of the English and History Departments at CA collaborate to select two to four CA Neustadt Scholars based on submissions modeled on and/or connected to the work of the Neustadt/NSK laureate for that year. The CA Neustadt Scholars attend the Neustadt/NSK Festival at the University of Oklahoma, their work is published in various journals by Colorado Academy and *World Literature Today*, and they participate in workshops with the winning authors and/or jurors.

Background information to help supplement lesson plans for the 2021 NSK Prize for Children's Literature laureate, Cynthia Leitich Smith:

Cynthia Leitich Smith is a *New York Times* and *Publishers Weekly* best-selling YA author of the Tantalize series and Feral trilogy. She was named Writer of the Year by the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers for *Rain Is Not My Indian Name* and won the American Indian Youth Literature Award for Young Adult Books for *Hearts Unbroken*, which also was named to YALSA's Amelia Bloomer list and received the Foreword Reviews Silver Medal in Young Adult Fiction. In addition, she is the author-curator of Heartdrum, an imprint of HarperCollins Children's Books, which launched its first list in winter 2021.

Smith lives in Austin, Texas, and is a citizen of the Muscogee Creek Nation.

"A powerful and brilliant choice to win the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature," said RC Davis-Undiano, executive director of *WLT*. "Cynthia Leitich Smith is a writer opening doors for other indigenous writers. She is also finding ways to open those doors wider for others to follow her in," Davis said.

Monica Brown, an award-winning author of many picture books, including *Waiting for the Biblioburro*, nominated Smith for the NSK Prize and chose her novel *Hearts Unbroken* as the representative text for the jury to read. *Hearts Unbroken* tells the story of a Native American girl who uses her position as her school's newspaper editor to report on racial tensions that erupt in a small Kansas town over casting in a local production of *The Wizard of Oz*. "How rare it is that a writer who has given us so many important, beautiful, entertaining, and empowering books has also given such an enormous gift to other writers, educators, and to children's literature as a whole," Brown wrote in her nominating statement.

A note about this guide

The lesson plans in this guide celebrate the work of Cynthia Leitich Smith by having students create original pieces that show their analysis of Smith's novel *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*. Students are guided through a technical process of understanding form and function in an effort to help them analyze Smith's novel and to enjoy the story that she tells. These lessons are teacher friendly and organized in a consistent structure. All lessons have a final product that students or groups of students will produce. In addition, there is an extensive <u>Readers Guide</u> to the book on Cynthia's website that will certainly serve as a complement to the lessons in this packet. The **objectives** for these lessons are as follows:

(1) to be able to empathize with character(s) in a novel as a basis for analytical thinking and writing;

(2) to be able to identity and celebrate the role of non-linear narrative style, which is a common element in Native Literature;

(3) to be able to appreciate the Native American voice and experience;

(4) to recognize the value of culturally responsive teaching and writing while celebrating one's own unique, cultural voice.

All Lessons are aligned to meet the following Common Core Standards

Anchor Standards for Reading (RL.9-10, RL.11-12)

- Key Ideas and Details:

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

- Craft and Structure:

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

- Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and Proficiently.

Anchor Standards for Language (L.9-10, L.11-12)

- Knowledge of Language:

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

- Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

All lessons are aligned to meet the following Oklahoma Standards for English Language Arts, Grades 9-12

Standard 1: Listening and Speaking

Students will listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations. **Listening**: Students will develop and apply effective communication skills through active listening. **Speaking**: Students will develop and apply effective communication skills to share ideas through speaking.

Standard 3: Critical Reading and Writing

Students will apply critical thinking skills to reading and writing. **Reading**: Students will analyze, interpret, and evaluate increasingly complex literary and informational texts that include a wide range of historical, cultural, ethnic, and global perspectives from a variety of genres. **Writing**: Students will thoughtfully and intentionally write, addressing a range of modes, purposes, and audiences.

Standard 4: Vocabulary

Students will expand and apply their spoken and reading vocabularies to speak, read, and write effectively. **Reading**: Students will expand their grade-level vocabularies through reading, word study, and class discussion. **Writing**: Students will apply knowledge of vocabulary to speak and write effectively.

Standard 5: Language

Students will expand and apply knowledge of grammar, usage, mechanics, and style to comprehend texts and communicate effectively. **Writing**: Students will expand and apply knowledge of grammar, usage, mechanics, and style to speak and write effectively, demonstrating standard usage when appropriate.

Standard 7: Multimodal Literacies

Students will comprehend and communicate knowledge through alphabetic, aural, visual, spatial, and/or gestural content. **Writing**: Students will create multimodal content to communicate effectively.

Standard 8: Independent Reading and Writing

Students will read and write independently for a variety of purposes and periods of time. **Writing**: Students will write independently, intentionally selecting modes, purposes, and audiences.

Grade level: 6-12 (2-3 class periods)

Lesson #1 - Letters to the Editor: In this lesson, students will review what a "Letter to the Editor" is and respond to a newspaper article of their choice (make sure they choose an article that actually interests them!). They will read previous letters to the editor to see how the writers expressed strong, clear opinions in just 150 to 200 words, all with a certain stylishness, wit and tact. Then, students will write their own letter to the editor and submit it for publication.

Inspired by the author herself, Tracie Vaughn Zimmer's suggestions for combining Bloom and Gardner's work, and Natalie Proulx's lesson, <u>Teaching with 'Letters to the Editor'</u>, for the *New York Times*, this lesson seeks to inspire the verbal-linguistic learner. Verbal-linguistic learners benefit from lessons that highlight the written and spoken word - they love to read and write - and this lesson has students doing both!

Newspaper article/submission ideas:

<u>The New York Times</u> (Students in U.S. high schools have free digital access to The New York Times until 9/1/2021.) <u>The Oklahoman</u> The Norman Transcript

Step One: reading articles (class period #1)

Students will read and analyze Letters to the Editor from a variety of news sources and cover a wide range of perspectives by scrolling through *The Oklahoman*, *The Norman Transcript*, or *The New York Times*. Questions for students to consider:

- What news stories caught your eye?
- What have you read that has outraged you? Inspired you? Moved you? Delighted you?
- What articles have made you feel "seen" or brought up a memory from long ago?

After reading through articles, students will choose three to four different articles that speak to them (maybe it's a critique, praise, a personal connection, etc.). They will return to this in Step Three.

Step Two: modeling good letters to the editor (class period #2)

Read at least three of these letters to the editor written by teenagers that won the <u>2020 high</u> school letter-writing competition from *The New York Times*.

If none of these inspire you, you can choose any three letters from the *New York Times* "Letters to the Editor" column, *The Oklahoman* "Letters to the Editor" column, or *The Norman Transcript* "Letters to the Editor" column. As you read your chosen letters, annotate and take notes about what you notice. Here are some questions to consider as you read:

1. Identify some basic parts of the structure of letters to the editor: How do they begin? How do they end? Which article is each letter responding to? How do you know?

2. What is the letter writer's opinion or point of view on the article they are responding to? Underline or highlight at least one sentence that captures the letter's main idea or argument. What do you think they know well? What is missing or do they not understand?

3. The Letters editors encourage writers to make their arguments "forcefully and clearly" as well as clear and concise. Do the letters that you read do that? What words, phrases or lines convey the writers' opinions or attitudes toward the subject in a clear, concise, and strong way?

4. Analyze the writers' use of language and style. What makes this letter interesting to read? What words, phrases and grammatical structures do they use that are particularly affecting? How do they use wit or humor, if at all?

Step Three: choosing an article and a timely issue (class period #2)

Return to the articles you chose to read in Step One. Read them thoroughly and then choose one that you want to respond to in your letter to the editor.

Remember, you can write about any issue - big or small, a world issue or an issue in your own community - but keep in mind that timeliness is key, so make sure that whatever piece you choose was published no more than seven days before you submit your letter.

Step Four: write a letter to the editor responding to an article (class period #3)

Requirements:

- Letters should be about 150 to 200 words. Keep your letters short and to the point.
- Letters should include the headline and a link to the article you are responding to.
- Letters should refer to an article that has appeared within the last seven days.

Beyond that, your letter can agree or disagree with any ideas voiced in your chosen article. Be creative with your language and writing style and have fun! And who knows, maybe your letter will be published!

Step Five: final reflection (homework after class period #3)

Write a paragraph that is submitted to your teacher along with the letter to the editor reflecting on if Rain were going to write a letter like this what might she want to write about? Why might this be difficult for her?

Grade level: 6-10 (3-4 class periods)

Lesson #2 - Acting out a scene from the book: Focus on a dialogue-based scene from the book. Work on converting that scene to something that could be performed.

With a focus on a particular scene from the novel and, in groups of 4-5, students will adapt the scene into a short vignette that they will write as a group and then act out in front of the class. In this lesson, students will develop skills to practice multimodal literacy while expanding their language skills for multiple audiences. By performing the dialogue, students will get immediate feedback.

Inspired by the author herself and by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer's suggestions for combining Bloom and Gardner's work, this lesson seeks to inspire the kinesthetic learner as well as introduce or reinforce the importance of theatre as a genre. Kinesthetic learners benefit from being up on their feet and interacting with other students in hands-on, experiential learning. Further, drama has always been an important mode for the presentation of interpersonal and cultural conflict. Smith's book features an abundance of dialogue between the main characters, so this lesson also seeks to explore the effect of a dialogue-rich narrative.

The following scenes would lend themselves well to this particular assignment; however, students may choose any dialogue-based scene. For each scene, students may use some of the exact dialogue from the book, and they should also adapt it and add to it as they deem appropriate. Students can change the language but not the accuracy of the details. The desired length of their scene is 5-7 minutes. All page numbers refer to the 2021 edition of *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*.

- 1. Rain goes to the grocery store. This is the first time she has been out since her friend's death and she runs into his mother, whom she really does not want to see. *(Setting: Hein's Grocery Barn; 3 characters: Rain, Mrs. Owen, Lorelei)* (pp. 16-19).
- 2. Fynn and Natalie tell Rain they are getting married. Rain also learns that Mrs. Owen is objecting to town funding of the Indian Camp. Natalie suggests that Rain become a photojournalist and take pictures for the local newspaper. (*Setting: Rain's living room; 3 characters: Rain, Fynn, Natalie*) (pp. 29-37).
- 3. Natalie shares the news that she is pregnant. *(Setting: Rain's porch; 2 characters: Natalie, Rain)* (pp. 62-64; 76-77).
- 4. Mrs. Owen confronts Rain about what happened the night of her son's death. *(Setting: Mrs. Owen's front porch; 2 characters: Rain, Mrs. Owen)* (pp. 93-96).
- 5. Flash and Rain talk about what it's like to be outsiders in a small town in Kansas. *(Setting: the newsroom; 2 characters: Flash, Rain)* (pp. 111-116).

6. Students may also choose to write their own scene based on events not depicted directly in the novel. For instance, they might wish to portray the funeral where Queenie reads her poem about Galen, or the city council meeting where Indian Camp is debated, or another scene involving Rain and her father. Again, they are not changing the details, but writing something new.

Important items for students to consider:

1. All of these scenes have initial action and then a point of conflict, which is essential in drama. How might you portray those conflicts in a way that best brings them to life?

2. Based on your reading of the novel, your performance of each character should reflect that character's personality in the book. In other words, be true to the spirit of Smith's original intent.

- 3. When writing out dialogue for a play, follow the format suggested <u>here</u>.
- 4. Tips to keep in mind to write this well:
 - Keep all the details factual and as they would appear in the book especially if you use a direct quote.
 - Choose as few characters as possible, and show what you KNOW about them based on your analysis of the text.
 - Remember that less is more when it comes to dialogue. Show what you know about the character's voice.
 - You should include any stage directions and character notes.

EXAMPLE:

Scene from *Rain Is Not My Indian Name* (based on pp. 47-51 in the novel)

Newsroom at the Hannesburg Weekly Examiner, in Hannesburg, Kansas. Day.

FLASH, a writing intern at the newspaper, is sitting at a messy table, writing. He wears a dark trench coat and his hair is uncombed. The room in general is small but efficient, with a couple of desktop computers on tables, and piles of paper everywhere. There are also stacks of previous editions of Examiner newspapers sitting around. RAIN enters the room with a few developed pictures in hand.

FLASH

[looking up] Any luck?

RAIN

[hands him one of the pictures] I think this one is pretty good.

FLASH

Not bad, for Little Miss Ask Permission.

RAIN

It's nice to work in a real darkroom again. You don't see too many of those these days. [*RAIN* tries to catch a glimpse of what FLASH is working on. He stashes his writing in a folder and crosses over to the other part of the room.]

FLASH

Aunt Georgia seemed really happy to see you.

RAIN

I guess so.

FLASH

So let's see if I have this right. Out of the total group of kids at the Indian Camp, only three of them actually live in Hannesburg?

RAIN

What difference does that make?

FLASH

I'm just trying to get the facts right. You know, I need the "who-what-when-where-how and-why" for the story.

RAIN

I know that there are nine total Indians living in town

FLASH

They prefer Native Americans. *[FLASH moves back over to the table.]* I'm going to call Mrs. Wilhelm just to double check the number.

RAIN

I should know how many *Native Americans* live in this town. It's not that big and I'm one of them. There's me, my brother, my uncle, Aunt Georgia, and the Headbirds. When they moved here that more than doubled the total.

FLASH

Ok, I get it. Everyone here in this creepy little town seems to know way too much about each other. But I have to be sure. That's how it is in real journalism. If I get it wrong, your future sister-in-law, my boss, will never give me a good rec.

RAIN

Well, I'm sure I'm right. [*FLASH ignores her and starts to write again. He takes a bite from an Oreo that is sitting on the table. She looks him over and crosses to him.*]

So. Aren't you going to ask me any questions?

FLASH

Like what?

RAIN

I don't know. The usual. Like "what are you"? Which can mean anything from "Why is your skin darker?" to "which Tribe are you from"? Lots of times I get "how much Indian are you?"

FLASH

And what would you say if I did ask you that?

RAIN

Well, usually I answer "about forty-five pounds worth."

FLASH

(laughs) That's a good answer.

RAIN

Usually white folks follow up with some sort of statement like "You don't seem Indian to me."

FLASH

And I suppose by that they mean you're not like in the movies or online or something.

RAIN

Yeah. I think for a lot of people being Indian involves construction-paper feathers, a plastic paint pony, and Malibu Pocahantas.

FLASH

Some people have a pretty limited view of things. Doesn't matter if they live in a small town or a big city.

RAIN

Most of the time here I've been the only one. In my middle school or at church. Even at McDonald's.

FLASH

(sarcastic) You mean Native Americans like McDonald's too?

RAIN

Amazing, right?

FLASH

Well for now, you're not actually *in* the story. You are covering it just like me. And I was hoping you could do a little more.

RAIN

What do you mean?

FLASH

I was thinking it would be amazing to do a feature project on this whole Native American youth camp. I could do an interview with Aunt Georgia. We could do profile pieces on a couple of the kids. You could help me with all the pictures.

RAIN

[trying hard not to sound too excited] Sure. I mean, I only signed on for a one-day shoot, but . . .

FLASH

[stands up and crossed to her] Shake on it?

RAIN Looks at his hand for a minute and then shakes it. RAIN and FLASH freeze, staring at one another as the lights on them dim down.

Grade level: 6-12 (2-3 class periods)

Lesson #3 - Photo & Literature Essay, "Worth a Thousand Words": Photo/Picture Essay Based on *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*.

Students will practice independent critical writing skills coupled with public speaking and listening skills. Students will choose a topic in the first class period and spend 2-3 class periods developing the photo essay, and then present on the final day.

"A picture is worth a thousand words" is an old adage, and visual representations of analytical ideas demonstrate complex understanding of a text. In this assignment students will collect a set of photos or create a set of photos/drawings and write captions for each. The resulting photo or picture "essay" should help the reader - teacher, a student's class, peers, or even families - understand a theme, scene, concept, relationship, symbol, or image essential to understanding and appreciating Cynthia Leitich Smith's young adult novel, *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*.

Format -

- Students create the photo essay in a program or app like Google Slides, PowerPoint, Haikuu Deck, etc. The emphasis must be on the clarity and concision of the content, with ample attention given to the aesthetics.
- The first line/title of the photo essay will substitute for the thesis statement of a standard written essay. It should be a complete idea, not a complete sentence. Example: "Living Native in Hannesburg".
- The essay must contain a minimum of 10 and maximum of 15 images (options include: photos, drawings, and/or collages) with a caption for each photo. The captions are in sentence form and serve as context, description, or analysis. Example: "Rain enjoyed seeing life through the lens of her camera, and liked the idea of bringing people into the world that she saw."
- The images and captions will constitute the points and evidence that support the writer's thesis, like body paragraphs in an expository, 5-paragraph essay.
- Students may choose to have slides with a section title.
- The final slide needs to be a bibliography/resources slide. Include a link or resource citation for each image.
- The final product should serve as a cohesive argument consisting of a title slide, 10-15 image slides, and a resources slide. For help structuring your essay, view the *Time* magazine photo essay <u>"The Famine the World Forgot"</u> and the related article <u>"Hell Freezes Over"</u>.

Students should choose their own subject (with approval from the teacher) or select a topic from the list below:

- 1. The novel has a non-linear narrative style, which is a common element in Native Literature. How does this style emphasize the characters and the events surrounding Rain?
- 2. Depict Rain's life with Galen, Ms. Owen, and Fynn. What do these relationships convey about Rain's life coming of age in Kansas?
- 3. Rain prefers to use specific Native Nation (or tribal) names, and when speaking broadly she alternates between Native American and American Indian. Depict the reasons(s) why you think the author made this choice for Rain.
- 4. Depict how you see Rain processing, dealing with, and living with loss in her life. Having lost two very important people to her her mother and Galen depict how you think grief makes Rain the person she is.
- 5. Depict parenthood, family, hospitality, or kinship in *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*, specifically Aunt Georgia and Grampa Berghoff.
- 6. On p. 34, Rain says, "So, Indian Camp is news. Culturally inclusive news." Depict the use and/or role of race, culture, and diversity in the novel *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*.
- 7. Create a photo/picture essay that Rain might have created had she decided to tell her story in this genre.
- 8. Depict your own story of personal and cultural growth, relating it to your reading of *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*. Your story should be honest but not so personal that you would not want to share it with your peers.

These websites offer colorful photos and examples of photo essays:

"I Want to Show Pride" by Sunnie R Clahchischiligi. Photographs by Magdalena Wosinska.

<u>"Developing Stories: Native Photographers in the Field"</u> Presents Contemporary Native Experiences from the Inside, March 24th, 2020, by Cécile R. Ganteaume.

"Homeland Afghanistan" The Asia Society. 7 November 2012.

Lund, Michael. <u>"Afghanistan: Country of War"</u> Michael Lund: Freelance Journalist n.d. 6 June 2008.

Rain Is Not My Indian Name Photo Essay Rubric/Evaluation guide

Student Name:

Requirements	Points Available	Points Earned	Comment
Does the presentation have a minimum of 10 photographs that demonstrate a variety of images and perspectives?	10		
Are there captions for every photo?	5		
Do the photos follow a central theme, & refer back to the thesis/title?	10		
Originality in the choice of photos that shows a unique perspective and/or sophisticated thinking?	10		
Quality and appropriate length of oral presentation (minimum 3 minutes, maximum 5 minutes)?	5		
Total	40		

Notes: