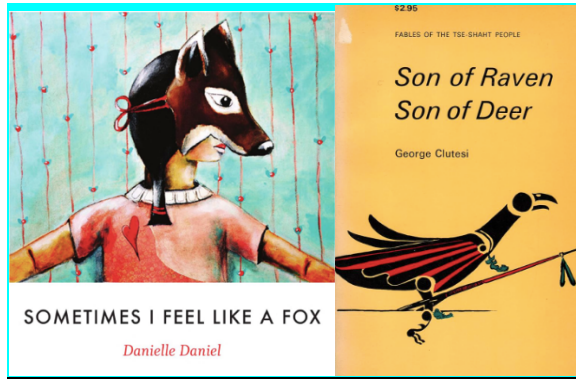


Story Drama – EDCI 305A (Kiana & Willow) – Intended for Grade 5/6

Transforming with Totems (integrating Indigenous culture within early Drama education)

Based on *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox*, written and illustrated by Danielle Daniel.

Inclusion of *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Fables of the Tse-shaht People* by George Clutesi.



Why Did We Choose These Stories?

We chose the stories *I Feel Like a Fox*, written and illustrated by Danielle Daniel and *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Fables of the Tse-shaht People* by George Clutesi for the significance of incorporating Indigenous stories and culture into our learning. We chose *Son of Raven, Son of Deer* by George Clutesi because he tells the tales of different animals and totems and their stories, and happens to be my great-grandfather. Animals and totems are both extremely significant beliefs in Indigenous culture because totems tell not only stories, but family lines, blood lines, clan, tribes or an individual and animals are significant because they are what we identify as. The second book we chose was *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox* by Danielle Daniel because this book ties in with the idea of totems. Just like *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*, *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox* shares the same Indigenous aspect of totems and what it means to identify as an animal.

Key Understandings and Questions

- Students will have the opportunity to engage with a fundamental piece Indigenous culture (for some Indigenous groups, not for all) – This lesson aligns with the integration of the First Peoples’ Principles of Learning in the classroom (within a Drama context) .
- Students are challenged to think of the ways we can relate to other animals (there is so much separation (siloed-learning) in colonial education systems and this lesson is an effort to break down those barriers between people and the nature around us).
- Students should be asking themselves about how they are similar to the totems they are learning about from the story *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox*, and how they are different?
- The lesson begins with a poem by George Clutesi, who was a hugely important figure in Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. The poem includes the theme of totems, as it discusses what makes a West Coast Indigenous person. This exposure to Indigenous authors is extremely beneficial to the students’ understanding of Indigenous culture.

More key questions are addressed in the closing debrief at the end of the lesson

1. Poem Share – Interactive Reading

(10 min)

Grouping:	Whole class
Strategy:	Reading/Listening
Administration:	Teacher poem share and students themselves read and reflect on the poem.
Focus:	To read and understand the poem “West Coast Indian” and to create an open discussion as to what it’s about.

This poem share will open discussion to help spark ideas for the future activities and help understand some knowledge behind Indigenous totems and animals and their significance.

Teacher: Before we start the first activity, I would like to acknowledge that we are learning and working today on the unceded territory of the WSÁNEĆ and lək̓ʷəŋən peoples and acknowledge that the book written by my great grandfather and the beliefs about totems and animals come from the Tsheshaht people on Nuw Chah Nulth territory. Moving on, for this activity, I will share the poem, in my great grandpa’s book, called “West Coast Indian” which focuses on a few aspects of totems and animals.

Have students listen to the poem share by the teacher.

Teacher: After that we will be doing some interactive reading on the poem and talk a little about what the poem means and what we can understand from it. After a think-pair-share we will talk about why totems are important in Indigenous cultures and what they mean.

Have students participate in a think-pair-share about the poem.

Teacher: Now I want share my personal example of my family’s totem and the animals we identify as. So, for example, in my family everyone has their own animal and at birth I was gifted to identify as a Raven, which is Ko-ish-in-mit in my dad’s language and my sister identifies as a deer which is Moowitch. The significance as to why my sister and I were named these is after the book *Son of Raven*, *Son of Deer* which represents the older, wiser, and trickster of the family (which is me) and the deer which is younger, more delicate and fragile (which is my sister) so our totem would include a raven and a deer. Now you all can think about what you would, individually, pick as your animal/totem for the next activity.

Students will listen to the personal connection to totems and animals.

2. Making Animals with Clothing

(7 min)

Grouping:	Individual work or in small groups
Strategy:	Expression/Creativity

Administration: Clothing used to create animal, open space
Focus: To be creative and thoughtful in making an animal in a resourceful way by using a piece of clothing.

Students in this activity will use a piece of their clothing, like a sweater or jacket to create an animal that they may resonate with or identify as. After they come up with their animal, everyone will mill about and share each other's animals that they came up with and possibly tell the story of why they resonate with that specific animal.

Teacher: For this activity, everyone will choose an animal they feel that they resonate with and or identify as.

Allow students time to think deep about what animal they will choose for this activity and the activities that will come after this one.

Teacher: Great! Once you have chosen your animal, I want everyone to use a piece of clothing to try your best to create this animal out of either a jacket, a sweater, a scarf or whatever you think will work.

Allow students time to create their animal to the best of their ability, then once done, bring back the class attention.

Teacher: Now that everyone is done creating their animals, I want everyone to walk around and observe other people's creations and share why you chose that animal.

Let the class mill about around the class and then bring class back in for the closing of the activity.

Teacher: Amazing work everyone, I hope you have all thought about why you chose the animal that you did and put your creative caps on to create super interesting and unique clothing animals! The point of this activity was to explore interests and incorporating that into the focus on a specific animal that describes you that will continue into the next activity!

3. Mime/Vocal Farmyard **(10 min)**

Grouping: Whole class (at first) – eventually ~ 7 different groups
Strategy: Observation/Listening/Expression
Administration: Students themselves (they create the visual), open space
Focus: To feel comfortable moving and making sounds like an animal (essentially doing things that seem ridiculous to feel fun and free as a class). To build confidence with unspoken expression (big movements), as well as, verbal expression (loud voices).

Organize all students into a straight line. Whisper an animal to each student (make sure you repeat every animal a few times to ensure those students with have a herd/pack – depending on class size this could mean 7 different animals). The objective is for every student to find their “pack/herd/etc.” by locating other people moving like their animal. Then, later on, they will practice the same activity with verbal expression instead of movement.

Teacher: At this point, every student, here, should know what animal they are going to become. When I say “go” you are going to move like the animal you were assigned (WITHOUT TALKING) and try to find your herd/pack/flock/etc. Can anyone show me how a cat moves?

Allow for the outburst of movement that will occur here. Then gather the students’ attention once again.

Teacher: Awesome movement, class! Make sure to spread out within this space so that you can move with big gestures and not be confined. The objective is to find the other animals like you as fast as possible, but I want to make sure we are moving with big, clear, strong actions that demonstrate the animals properly. Ready? GO!

When every group has found their family, give the students a round of applause and move swiftly onto the next step of the activity.

Teacher: Well done everyone! Now, let’s see if we can take it to the next step and, rather than express our assigned animal using our bodies, we are going to use our voices. Can anyone tell me what sound a cat makes?

Allow the explosion of noise here, while the students meow like cats to show what they can do. And, then, gather the attention back.

Teacher: Wow! I am impressed. So, we know our animal sounds then! I am going to do the same as before, when I gave you each an animal. But, this time, I would like you to only use your voices to create the sound that animal makes and find others that are making a similar sound to yours. This time, we need to use our ears to detect our pack/herd/etc.

Line the students up and give each person an animal (make sure to repeat a few times to ensure everyone has a group to find).

Teacher: Remember that we are only using our voices, not our bodies anymore. Feel free to mill around to find your group (use the space). Ready? GO!

When every group has found their family, give the students a round of applause and close up the activity.

Teacher: Great work, students! The point of doing an activity like this is to make us all feel comfortable creating dramatic expressions with our voices and body movements. Let's all carry this energy into our next activities, today. But, first, we are going to cool down for a bit while I read today's story.

4. Read the Text Aloud **(7 min)**

Grouping: Whole class
Strategy: Story reading
Administration: Text of *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox*
Focus: To involve the text in the class (to give the students context)

Teacher: Gather around in front of me, take a seat, and make sure you can see and hear the story.

Teacher reads the whole story (as it is relatively short), and allows for pauses when students want to show a connection (using their hands) and/or need to laugh, etc.

5. Step Up to the Line **(7 min)**

Grouping: Whole class
Strategy: Self-reflection/text-to-self connection
Administration: Masking tape in a straight line on the ground (middle of the room, open space)
Focus: Students are tasked with relating their own identity to the identity of different animals. The challenge, for them, is to see personality and emotion within different animals, and that is what is inspired to occur from this text. This activity helps break down the barrier we put up between ourselves and other animals.

Line the students up on one side of the tape, and then tell the alternating students to step on the other side of the tape so they are staggered). Students should be facing in, with the line between them.

Teacher: I am going to deliver a series of statements, and if you feel that a statement describes you please step up to the line. You can step up to the line multiple times as long as whatever characteristics I mention, describe you. If you do not identify with a statement, stay where you are. Ready?
Step up to the line if you feel confident and strong like a bear.
Pause. Step back. Step up to the line if you feel sensitive and kind like a deer. *Pause.* Step back. Step up to the line if you feel busy

and purposeful like a beaver. *Pause*. Step back. Step up to the line if you feel delicate and free like a butterfly. *Pause*. Step back. Step up to the line if you feel dark and mysterious like a raven. *Pause*. Step back. Step up to the line if you feel intelligent and loyal like a wolf. *Pause*. Step back. Step up to the line if you feel slow and quiet like a turtle. *Pause*. Step back.

Tell the students to sit down where they are, and pose a question to them about the activity.

Teacher: Did anyone feel as though they closely related to one type of animal more than the others?

Allow students to share their point of view about relating their identity to a certain animal.

6. Mask Design **(8 min)**

Grouping:	Individual work
Strategy:	Animal and totem identity with materials
Administration:	Open space, paper bags, markers, scissors
Focus:	Students are taking time to think in a meaningful way about how to choose an animal/totem that they believe describes them or and animal/totem that they identify as.

Students will choose between seven different “totems/animals” which are labelled bags. Students will then create their own masks depending on what animal they may have chosen and draw that creature on the paper bag to imitate a “mask”.

Teacher: For this activity, everyone will choose one paper bag out of seven different categories of labelled bags, of “totems/animals,” that they feel suits them. Then, you are all going to, individually, draw your totem or animal that you chose on your paper bag to create your own mask.

Let students create their own masks with the materials provided (markers and paper bags).

Teacher: Now that you have all taken the time to create your own, unique mask, you are all going to mill to find other people that chose the same totem/animal as you.

Once students have found their classmates that chose the same totem/animal that they did, you are ready for the next activity.

7. Conscience Alley (Busy Coffee Shop) **(11 min)**

Grouping:	Four groups of seven
Strategy:	Animal identity in a human context

Administration: Open space, students demonstrate the scene (1 mask per group for the totem/animal to wear)
Focus: Students are seeing how these characteristics that are related to certain animals can be applied within regular human scenarios.

Divide the class into four groups of seven and assign each group an animal (bear, beaver, butterfly, turtle). Tell students to sit in their groups and listen to further instruction.

Teacher: Now that you have been assigned a totem within your group, I am going to give you the context in which your totem has just walked into, and I want you to work as a group to demonstrate, through a Conscience Alley, what would be going through that totem's head. One student in your group is going to be the totem and they will walk slowly and silently between the rest of the group (they may wear a mask), who will be stationed on either side facing inwards and spread out. As the totem walks by each person, they will say one brief thought (one at a time). I will give you three minutes to figure out what everyone is going to say and organize your Conscience Alley, and then we will present one group at a time. The context will be a busy coffee shop with a VERY long line. Begin!

Allow the students three minutes to create and brainstorm (while you circulate to offer insight). Then, gather everyone's attention to present to the class.

Teacher: Okay everyone! It is time to present. I would like the other groups to sit down while each group presents their Conscience Alley. We will start with this group, and travel clockwise.

After the last group presents, give a round of applause for all of the groups and close the activity.

Teacher: Well done! When we work with totems in an activity like this, it reminds us of the fact that we are animals, too. A lot of the thoughts that different animals would have based on their characteristics are similar to thoughts we would have as different people with unique identities. We are all connected.

8. Re-enactment of Totems/Animals (12 min – 5 min for prep and 7 min to present)

Grouping: 7 groups of 4
Strategy: Animal/Totem re-enactment alongside narration
Administration: Open space, students present their totems while the teacher narrates the totem (from the text) that the group chose

Focus: Students are being creative with the way they express their totem that they chose as a group and showing the whole class their mask creations.

Students are asked to find their group that chose the same totem as them, once again, and they should end up in groups of four. In these smaller groups they will silently act out a scene of their totem altogether while the teacher reads the excerpt from the text about that totem (Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox).

Teacher: I am so impressed with all of your different designs of your totems, now that you all have found who chose the same totems as you and are in groups, I would like you to create a mime re-enactment of your totem that you will present as a group while I read the page from the text about your totem. I am going to give you 5 minutes to prepare your presentation.

Allow each group time to collaborate while you circulate to offer advice/input.

Teacher: Fantastic! Now that we are ready, each group will have about one minute to present your group totem/animal as I read from the text.

After every group presents, bring back the student's attention for the closing activity.

9. Closing Activity (debrief) (6 min)

Grouping: Whole class
Strategy: Open Discussion
Administration: Open space, students share their ideas, comments and opinions on the activities.
Focus: Students are diving into how Indigenous learning can be brought into a drama class and how meaningful totems/animals are in Indigenous culture.

Group discussion on why totems are important and share other ideas on the significance of them. Each student will share what they chose and why they feel like that suits them and or is appropriate, or if they identify as creature already in their culture. Then we will bring it back to the books that we worked off of, Son of Raven, Son of Deer and Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox and talk about how we incorporated the idea of totems and animals into a drama activity and why this activity could be meaningful and educational for students that identify as Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Lastly students can share their comments and opinions about the class and activities.

Teacher: I am very impressed by all of you today and the creations you all came up with. After participating in the different activities, I would like to know “Why do you think totems are important?”

Allow students to answer the question and discuss with them.

Teacher: Great ideas everyone! Now next question, “Why did you choose the totem/animal that you did?”

Allow students to answer the question and share their ideas.

Teacher: Last question, “did you all like the activities that we did today and do you think that you learnt something about totems/animals in Indigenous culture and the meaning behind them?”.

Allow students to discuss and answer the question, and then dismiss class.

Materials

Activity 1: Text of *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Fables of the Tse-shaht People*

Activity 2: Students’ Extra Clothing (ex. Jackets, Scarves, Hats, etc.)

Activity 5: Text of *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox*

Activity 6: Approximately 10ft of Masking Tape

Activity 7: Paper Bags (8”x 4”x 10”), Markers, Scissors -> (enough for the whole class or pairs)

Resource

Daniel, D. (2018). *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox*. NNELS/VIRN.

Additional resources

Clutesi, G. (1968). *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Fables of the Tse-shaht People*. Gray’s Pub.

Miller, C. S., & Saxton, J. (2016). *Into the Story 2: More Stories! More Drama!* Intellect.

Assessment suggestions

Students could be assessed based on their performance in the final re-enactment within their totem groups (as well as within the final debrief). Try to avoid assessing students during the earlier activities in the lesson because that is their chance to act freely without the pressure of being judged or marked.

*This is a 78 min lesson. Two minutes are spared for leniency (in case one activity carried over by a minute or so). *