



LESSON PLAN

TREATY WORDS FOR AS LONG AS THE RIVERS FLOW

by Aimée Craft • illustrated by Luke Swinson

Lesson plan by Kareena Butler

Genre: fiction

Themes: Indigenous history, treaties

Suitable for: Ages 10+, Grades 5+

Guided Reading Level: Fountas and Pinnell P

Lexile: 920L

Common Core standards: RL.3.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9

W.3.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,1e,1f,1g,1h,1i,3,3a,3b,3c,3d,4,5,6,7,8

SL.3.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,2,3,4,5,6

L.3.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,1e,1e,1g,1h,1i,2,2a,2c,2d,2e,2g,3,3,a,3b,4,4a,4b,4c,
4d,5,5a,5b,5c,6

Summary:

Treaty Words: For As Long As The Rivers Flow by Aimée Craft shares the bond between a grandfather (Mishomis) and his granddaughter as they have a conversation by the water (kitchi sipi). As they spend time together, the granddaughter learns about the importance of relationships, reciprocity, and Treaties. Mishomis passes on Anishinaabe knowledge and understanding about the first agreement, natural law or earth's law, that was made with all of our relatives. Through moments spent sitting in silence, the young girl learns to appreciate the beauty and the teachings of each living thing. *Treaty Words: For As Long As The Rivers Flow* offers readers a deeper understanding of Treaties and the importance of respect, reciprocity, and renewal for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow.

Please remember that the suggested questions and activities within this lesson plan are meant to serve as a starting point. They should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.

BEFORE READING THE BOOK



These activities build the context, introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest. This story reflects an Anishinaabe worldview; although it may be similar to other First Nations and Indigenous groups, it should not be viewed as the same for all.

Introduce the author, Aimée Craft, who is Anishinaabe/Métis from Treaty 1 territory in Manitoba.

Illustrator Luke Swinson is Anishinaabe, a member of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation.

- Locate these geographical locations on a map.

The grandfather (Mishomis) shares an Anishinaabe worldview about treaties.

- Research the Anishinaabe.
- Locate the territory associated with the Anishinaabe on the map.

Remember to discuss in the present tense as the Anishinaabe are still here and still contribute to society.

Look at the title: *Treaty Words: For As Long As the Rivers Flow*

Ask students to discuss the meaning of the title.

- What length of time does “for as long as the rivers flow” imply?
- Why is the phrase “for as long as the rivers flow” more meaningful and more powerful than saying forever?

Read the dedication by Aimée Craft.

“This book is dedicated to those who will come next . . . the teachers and the learners.”

Ask students the following questions:

- Who are the teachers?
- Who are the learners?

Have students turn and talk with a partner or in a small group before sharing their answers in a larger group.

Record students’ thoughts on chart paper or have students write their reflections in a journal. Remind students to remember the dedication and questions as they read the story. (Revisit this after reading.)



WHILE READING THE BOOK



These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

1. Create understanding about promises, agreements, and treaties with the following discussion questions:
 - What is a promise?
 - Why should you keep your promises?
 - How do you feel when a promise is broken or not honored?
2. A Treaty is a promise, an agreement, and the foundation of trusting and respectful relationships.
“Treaty: it means that we agree to work together.” (p.31)

The author describes different Treaty relationships in the story, the original treaty (natural law), Treaties between Nations (before European arrival), and Treaties with the Crown.

- Create a visual representation to explain (using a bubble word map or drawing) or to compare and contrast (using a t-chart) the Treaties.
- The treaty-making process is important. What happens if the groups making the agreement don't have the same understanding or worldview of sharing and respect for the land? (For example, the Crown had a different worldview about land ownership than the Anishinaabe.)
- Is the school located on Treaty territory (numbered treaties)? Is it on Unceded Territory or part of Inuit and Métis homelands? (“Unceded” refers to land that hasn't been legally signed away to the Crown or to Canada.) Find the names of local First Nations communities, Inuit, or Métis homelands on or near your territory.

The Anishinaabe (and other First Nations) have agreements recorded on Wampum Belts. These are living agreements and visual representations of promises made between First Nations and all living things. They were made before and after European arrival.

- Learn about Wampum Belts and if there are any on your territory.

3. Natural Law helps to keep us in good relations with each other and the environment.
Read the following passage on page 33:

“Long ago, we made treaties with our brothers and sisters, the animal nations . . . With the deer nation, for example, we agreed not to take too many of them. In turn they would provide us with food and sustenance. We agreed to work together. To collaborate and respect each other.”

Discussion prompts:

- Who shares the land where you live? (Create a list which includes Land/rocks, water, animals, plants)
- How are we respectful to each other and all living things? (Record students' answers)
- What happens when we no longer follow these natural laws? What are some consequences?
- What are our roles and responsibilities to all living things? (include Land/rocks, water, animals, plants)
- What promises can you make to the Land and all living things?

AFTER READING THE BOOK



These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this text, and stimulate further extensions.

1. Re-read the dedication by Aimée Craft.

“This book is dedicated to those who will come next . . . the teachers and the learners.”

Re-visit what students said before reading the story. Now ask students again:

- Who are the teachers?
- Who are the learners?

Ask students if their perspectives have changed in any way after reading the book. What new information could they add to their initial reflections?

2. Read the following passage from page 11 of the book:

“Mishomis taught her how to hear, challenging her to understand each sound, from the most pronounced bird calls to the subtle sound of tiny insects crawling around the grass.”

Ask:

- How are the words silent and listen the same? (They are made up of the same letters.)
- Why is it important to listen?
- When you take a moment to listen to the land and to ourselves, what do you notice, and what do you hear and learn?

Outdoor activity:

- Have the students find a spot to sit, be silent, listen, and observe their surroundings for five to ten minutes. The students should use their senses to remember the sounds, the colors, and the sensations and emotions they experience. Ask students to replicate what they heard in a soundscape, to draw/paint what they saw, to sculpt something they touched, or to write a poem describing how they felt in the moment. (Have students return to the same spot outdoors each season, and ask them to be silent and to listen. What has changed?)
- Ask students which outdoor sounds bring them joy. What outdoor sounds bring them joy? Can they identify what made the sound? Can they name the bird, the tree, or the animal?

3. Reflect on this passage from the Author's Note on page 55:

**“There is so much to learn from everything around us.
It helps us better understand what's inside of us as human beings.”**

- Ask students whether they connect with this statement and if yes, ask them to explain how. Does learning about the world around us teach us more about ourselves?

4. Continue to build a relationship with the Land

- Walk on the Land, around the school yard, and ask the students to observe all living things around them. Do they know the Indigenous names of the living things around you? How can they learn them?

5. Take action for all living things

- List the gifts the Land shares to keep us alive, then list the gifts we give the Land. Is this a balanced list? How is this relationship reciprocal? How can we make it reciprocal? Create a list of actions to all living things remembering the words renewal, responsibility, and reciprocity.
- Ask students how they will keep their promise to all living things (the Land/rocks, water, animals, plants) for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow.
- When one makes a promise, how can one demonstrate it comes from the heart?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



These activities are only a start. They are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the story and their own creativity.

1. Research more information about the territory the students live on. Learn the original names and significance for places and waters in that territory.
2. Choose a page/passage and create music or a soundscape to accompany a read-aloud of the page/passage.
3. Create a classroom Treaty, an agreement and a promise to work together and respect each other.
4. Learn the Indigenous names for water on the territory where students reside or go to school. There are many words to describe water.

