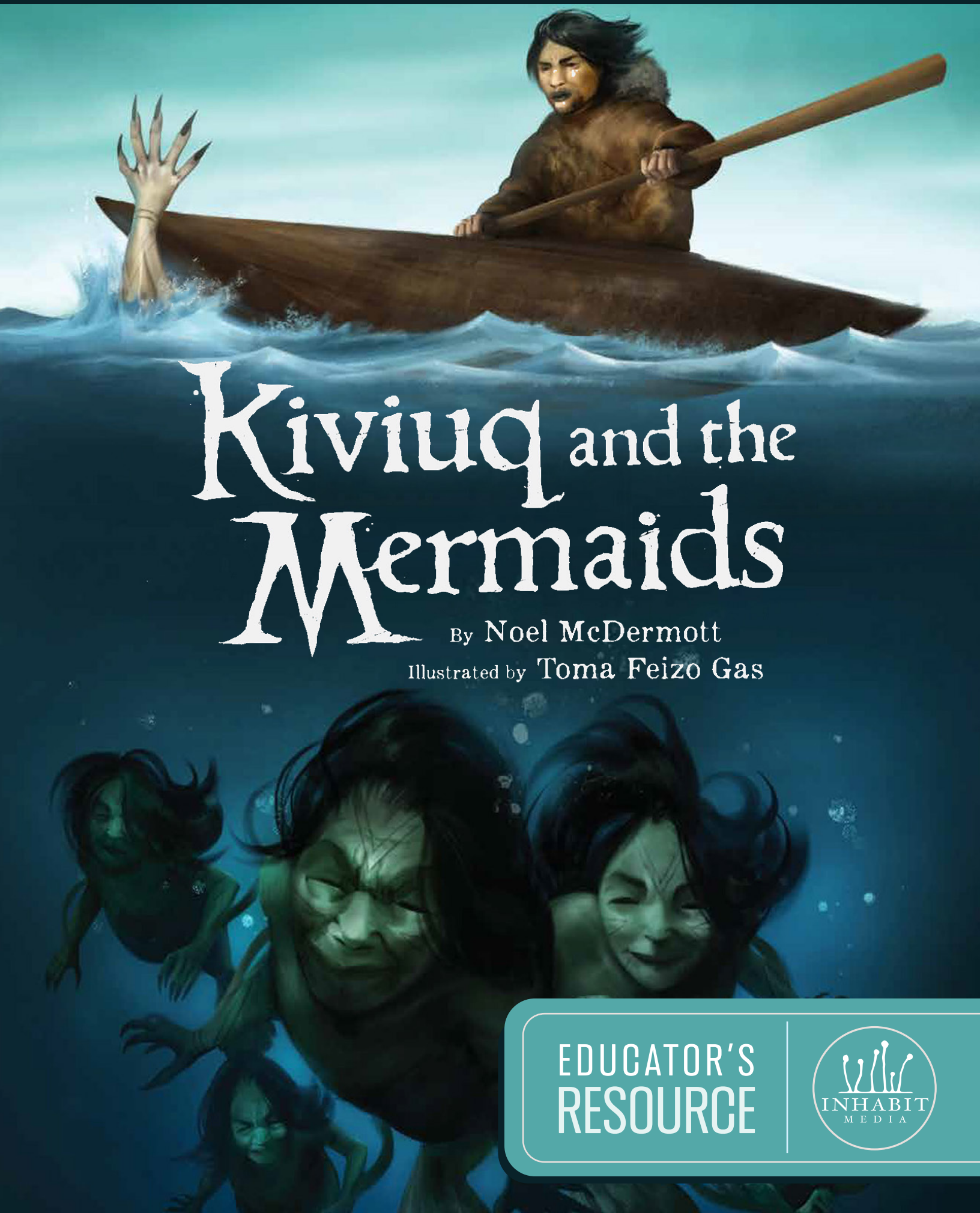

Kiviuq and the Mermaids

By Noel McDermott

Illustrated by Toma Feizo Gas

EDUCATOR'S RESOURCE

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Kiviuq and the Mermaids

About the Book

Kiviuq, one of the greatest and most important characters in Inuit mythology, is said to have travelled over land and sea overcoming obstacles and successfully defeating various fearsome foes. In *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*, young readers experience one of Kiviuq's most heart-pounding adventures: an encounter with a group of frightening mermaids. With only his *qayaq* to keep him out of their clutches, Kiviuq must think fast to defeat these angry creatures of the deep!

About the Author

Noel McDermott is a retired professor of literature at Nunavut Arctic College where he lived and taught in Inuktitut and English for thirty-five years as a classroom teacher, school principal, and lecturer in the teacher training program. He has held teaching appointments at many other educational institutions, including Queen's University, McGill University, Trent University, the University of Waterloo, as well as at the Sami University in Kautokeino, Norway.

About the Illustrator

From his early days of reading sci-fi and fantasy books, Toma Feizo Gas has been fascinated with the dramatic scenes portrayed on the covers of those books. There started his lifelong love affair with telling stories through pictures. Today, Toma's key influence remains the people in these stories, the motives that drive us, and the decisions that shape us, propelling him to craft bold visual statements and contrast in his own art. As a career illustrator, his work can be found gracing the pages and covers of titles such as *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Pathfinder*, the *Star Wars* and *Mutant Chronicles* role-playing games, as well as several upcoming fantasy novel series.

Note to Educators

This guide is geared toward students in Grades 4 to 6, and contains pre-reading activities, discussion questions, learning activities, and extension activities focused on the book *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*. The activities may be modified to suit the learning needs of your students. Students will participate in reading, writing, comprehension, and reflection activities to analyze and respond to the story. The activities encourage text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections. This guide is intended for use with a class set of *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Ask your students to look at the cover of *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*. Read the title out loud and ensure that all of your students can see the illustration. Ask students to predict what they think the story is about, based on the title and the illustration. Encourage students to support their predictions with evidence from the cover. Record students' predictions and revisit them after they have finished reading.

- *Kiviuq and the Mermaids* contains many words and phrases in Inuktitut. Depending on your students' familiarity with Inuktitut, you may wish to review these words and phrases before your students begin to read the story. There is a glossary of all Inuktitut terms used in the story on pages 32–33. With students, review each word and its meaning. Practise pronouncing each word with your students. If your students are familiar with Inuktitut, you may wish to review vocabulary from the story that may be challenging for your students.

During and Post-Reading Discussion Questions

The following questions and discussion points can be used during and after reading *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*. Provide students with the chance to voice their own opinions, share their experiences, ask questions, or point out anything else they may notice about the book.

Pages 2–9

- Who is telling the story of Kiviuq?
  (*Ataatatsiaq* or Grandfather.)
- How does Ataatatsiaq describe Kiviuq?
  (As a great hunter and traveller.)
- Who helps Kiviuq escape the storm by guiding his *qajaq* into calm water?
  (The spirits of the seabird *saurraq* and *nanuq* the polar bear.)
- Kiviuq knew that the seal who was chanting was not an ordinary seal. What does Kiviuq reveal about the seal?
  (The seal is the grandson of the old *angakkuq*.)
- Kiviuq believes the seal spared him because he was kind to the grandson of the old angakkuq. What lesson can we learn from this moment in the story?
  (Answers will vary. For example, always treat others with kindness.)

Pages 10–19

- When Kiviuq falls asleep in his qajaq, who does he dream of?
  (His wife, grandchildren, relatives, and friends.)
- Kiviuq thinks he sees an *ugjuq*, or bearded seal. What does Kiviuq actually see?
  (A young *tuutalik*, or mermaid.)

- What do the Elders say about *tuutaliit*?
  (Tuutaliit may try to trick a person by pretending to be friendly.)
- What does the tuutalik say she will do to Kiviuq's qajaq? What will happen if she is successful?
  (She says she will rip Kiviuq's qajaq to pieces. If she is successful, he will drown.)

Pages 20–25

- What does Kiviuq use to try and push the mermaid away?
  (His *unaaq*, or harpoon.)
- How does Kiviuq feel when he encounters a sea full of tuutaliit?
  (He is terrified.)
- Why are the tuutaliit so angry?
  (Because Kiviuq hit the mermaid on the head.)

Pages 26–31

- How do you think Kiviuq feels when he spots the floating ice connected to a small island?
  (Answers will vary. For example, Kiviuq might feel excited, happy, or hopeful.)
- After escaping the tuutaliit, what do you think Kiviuq dreamt about?
  (Answers will vary. For example, he may have dreamt about the tuutaliit.)
- Do you think Kiviuq will be able to return home to his wife and family? Why or why not?
  (Answers will vary.)

Learning Activitites

- Read students the following quotation from *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*:

  > "Before long, the wind was roaring like an angry walrus and the waves were higher than an iceberg" (page 5).

  Explain to students that when Ataatatsiaq compares the wind to an angry walrus, he is using a figure of speech called a simile. Tell students that a simile is a comparison between two things using the words "like" or "as." Provide students with other examples of similes, such as "cold as ice" or "light as a feather." Ask students to create three of their own similes to describe different moments from the story. Provide students with the following example from the moment when the tuutalik was tearing at Kiviuq's qajaq: "Her nails are as long as a snow knife." You may wish to create one more simile with students before they begin to work independently.
- Ask students to think about the emotions that Kiviuq feels at different moments throughout the story. Tell students to select adjectives to describe Kiviuq's emotions during three different moments in the story. Then, ask students to provide a quotation or summarize a passage from the story that supports their chosen adjective. For example, if your students feel that Kiviuq is scared at the beginning of the story during the storm, they may explain that he was scared because of the roaring wind and high waves.

- Ask students to share the emotions Kiviuq might have felt at the end of the story when he escaped the tuutaliit. Record students' responses on a piece of chart paper. Tell them they will write a journal entry from Kiviuq's perspective at the end of the story. The journal entry should describe Kiviuq's thoughts and feelings about all the challenges he faced when he encountered the storm, the tuutalik, and the group of tuutaliit. Tell students that when they are writing, they will pretend that they are Kiviuq. Explain to students that they will write their journal entry in the first person, using phrases like "I think" or "I feel."

Extension Activities

The following section contains extension activities for *Kiviuq and the Mermaids* that can be incorporated into different subject areas.

Art

Ask students to look at the cover of *Kiviuq and the Mermaids* and share the details they notice about the cover, whether it's the illustrations, text, or something else. Ask students what they like about the cover. Record students' responses on a piece of chart paper. Tell students they will design a new book cover for *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*. The new book cover should be eye-catching and make someone want to read the book. Tell students that their book cover should contain the title, author's and illustrator's names, and illustrations that depict some part of the story. Students may use the medium of their choosing for their book cover, such as paint, pencil crayons, pastels, and so on.

Drama

Ask students to identify what they think are the most important events from *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*. Tell students that they will select a significant event from the story and transform it into a readers' theatre script. Explain that readers' theatre is similar to oral storytelling and encourages students to read with expression. Tell students that readers' theatre often involves no props, no memorizing, and no costumes. Organize students into small groups and ask each group to select an important event from *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*. If possible, try to make sure that the groups choose different events, so there isn't too much repetition. Then, students will work in their groups to transform that event into a script. When groups finish writing their readers' theatre scripts, they will take turns performing their scripts for the class.

History

Provide students with the resources needed to research the qajaq, the boat Kiviuq uses to hunt and travel on the sea. Students should research the following topics:

- The history of the qajaq
- The importance of the qajaq to Inuit
- What materials Inuit used to make a qajaq

After students have had time to conduct research, they will write a brief report summarizing what they learned about the qajaq.

Math

Together with students, research the average speed of a modern qajaq or kayak. Then, create a list of sea animals with students, such as walruses, seals, or whales. Encourage students to share many sea animals so they will have lots of data. Record students' responses on a piece of chart paper. Research the average swimming speeds of the sea creatures and record the speeds on the chart paper, ensuring that the speeds are in the same units (such as kilometres per hour). Ensure that students can see all of the data. Ask students the following questions:

- Which sea animal swims the fastest? Which sea animal swims the slowest?
- Which animals are faster than a qajaq? Which animals are slower than a qajaq?

Work together with students to determine the mean, median, and mode for your collected data. The mean is the average number of the data, and is calculated by adding all of the numbers in your data and then dividing by the number of numbers in your collected data. The median is the middle number when the data is ordered from smallest to largest. The mode is the number that occurs most frequently in the data.

Music

Ask students to share their favourite moments from *Kiviuq and the Mermaids*. Record students' responses on a piece of chart paper. Then, ask students to describe the sounds that Kiviuq would have heard during these different moments in the story. For example,

during the big storm, Kiviuq would have heard loud wind, crashing waves, and the seal's chant. Write the sounds that Kiviuq would have heard next to the corresponding moment from the story on the same piece of chart paper.

Explain to students that by using simple instruments or objects around the school, they will create the sounds that Kiviuq heard at different moments in the story. For example, if Kiviuq heard loud wind during the storm, students will have to find an instrument or object that they can manipulate to make the sound of wind. Organize students into small groups and assign each group a different moment from the story from the list on the chart paper. Encourage students to think of the instruments or objects that could create the sounds and allow students to have time to acquire the needed objects from different areas around the school. Encourage students to be creative and try many different objects or instruments to create the sounds. At the end of the activity, allow students to share their sounds with the other groups.