

Those Who Run in the Sky



EDUCATOR'S
RESOURCE



Those Who Run in the Sky

About the Book

Those Who Run in the Sky is a coming-of-age story that follows a young shaman named Pitu as he learns to use his powers and ultimately finds himself lost in the world of the spirits.

After a strange and violent blizzard leaves Pitu stranded on the sea ice, without his dog team or any weapons to defend himself, he soon realizes that he is no longer in the world that he once knew. The storm has carried him into the world of the spirits, a world populated with terrifying creatures—black wolves with red eyes, ravenous and constantly stalking him, and water-dwelling creatures that want nothing more than to snatch him and pull him into the frigid ocean through an ice crack—as well as beings less frightening, but equally as incredible, such as a lone giant who can carry Pitu in the palm of her hand and keeps caribou and polar bears as pets.

After stumbling upon a fellow shaman who has been trapped in the spirit world for many years, Pitu must master all of his shamanic powers to make his way back to the world of the living, to his family, and to the girl that he loves.

About the Author

Aviaq Johnston is a young Inuk author from Igloolik, Nunavut. Her debut novel *Those Who Run in the Sky* was released in the spring of 2017. In 2014, she won first place in the Aboriginal Arts and Stories competition for her short story “Tarnikuluk,” which also earned her a Governor General’s History Award. Aviaq is a graduate of Nunavut Sivuniksavut, and she has a diploma in social service work from Canadore College. Aviaq loves to travel and has lived in Australia and Vietnam. She spends most of her time reading, writing, studying, and procrastinating. She goes back and forth between Iqaluit, Nunavut, and Ottawa, Ontario.

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*, and 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 9 to 12, and contains pre-reading activities, chapter-by-chapter discussion questions, and extension activities focused on the novel *Those Who Run in the Sky* by Aviaq Johnston. The activities and discussion questions 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. Students will respond to discussion questions, either orally or in writing, that encourage text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections. This guide is intended for use with a class set of *Those Who Run in the Sky*.

Those Who Run in the Sky contains many words and phrases in Inuktitut. If you are not familiar with Inuktitut, there is a glossary of all Inuktitut terms used in the story on pages 198–202. Ensure that students are aware of the glossary so that they may refer to it while reading.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Ask your students to look at the cover of *Those Who Run in the Sky*. 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. Record students' predictions and revisit them after they have finished reading.
- Ask students to read the author's note on pages 204–205. You may also read this section out loud to students. After reading, ask students to share what they learned about the novel. You may ask students to share whether the novel is fiction or non-fiction, how the author chose the characters' names, or what they learned about the setting of the story.
- In the author's note, Aviaq Johnston explains that *Those Who Run in the Sky* "is set in the old days before Inuit traditions began to change and adapt to include the things that whalers, traders, and missionaries taught Inuit" (page 204). Create a KWL (Know, Wonder, Learn) chart with your students on a piece of chart paper. Ask your students what they know and what they would like to know about Inuit culture and ways of living during the traditional era. Record their responses in the appropriate columns. After reading, ask your students to share what they learned and complete the appropriate column.

During and Post-Reading Discussion Questions

The following questions and discussion points can be used during and after reading *Those Who Run in the Sky*. 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.

Chapter 1: The Breathing Hole

- Pitu stood for hours hunched over the breathing hole while he waited for a seal to appear. What are some characteristics that you think Pitu needs to possess to be a successful hunter?
- Explain the significance of Pitu putting melted snow water into the mouth of the seal.
- Pitu felt a sense of pride when the others congratulated him for catching a seal. Can you think of a time when you were proud of an accomplishment?

Chapter 2: Feast

- What are some challenges that can arise when hunters become restless?
- What is the nature of the relationship between Pitu and Saima? Use an example from the chapter to support your answer.

Chapter 3: The First Dream

- It is revealed that Anaana adopted Pitu's younger siblings, Arnaapik and Atiq. Select three adjectives that you would use to describe Anaana. Support your choices with evidence from the chapter.

Chapter 4: Visitors

- Why do you think that Pitu has feelings of jealousy when he is speaking to Saima and Sikuliaq?
- How do the spirits treat greedy hunters?

Chapter 5: The Elder

- After Pitu apologizes to Saima, she says, "You think all I want is a promise?" (page 39). What do you think Saima means by this?
- Tagaaq says to Pitu, "I believe there is much darkness in your future" (page 51). What do you think Tagaaq means by "darkness"?



Chapter 6: Summer

- At the bottom of page 54, the narrator uses the word “nomadic.” What does this word mean? Use clues from the text to help support your answer.
- Tagaaq explains to Pitu that it is difficult to be a leader. Do you agree or disagree with Tagaaq’s statement? What characteristics do you think a person needs to possess in order to be an effective leader?

Chapter 7: Powers

- At the end of the chapter, Pitu goes out to sea alone in a *qajaq*. The narrator explains, “Everything out here was an extension of Pitu’s soul” (page 72). What do you think the narrator means by this?
- Do you have a special place where you feel at home? Describe that place using the five senses. When you are there, what do you see? Smell? Hear? Touch? Taste?

Chapter 8: Winter

- Why did Tagaaq decide to move the camp close to Iglulik for the winter?
- What are the expectations that young married couples are supposed to uphold?
- At the bottom of page 76, the narrator uses the word “betrothed.” What does this word mean? Use clues from the text to help support your answer.



Chapter 9: Whiteout

- Before reading the chapter, predict what you think will happen based on the chapter title. Explain how you arrived at your prediction.
- Why did Pitu's dog team stop running and stare into the distance?
- Imagine that you are Pitu. How would you have felt after waking up and finding that your dog team and supplies were gone?
- What is a *qallupilluq*?
- After reading the chapter, revisit your prediction. Was it correct or incorrect?

Chapter 10: Demons

- What do you think the black wolves represent? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- In this chapter, Pitu faces many challenges. Select three adjectives you would use to describe Pitu in this chapter. Support your choices with examples from the text.

Chapter 11: Giant

- What is Inukpak? What does the name "Inukpak" mean?
- At the beginning of the chapter, Pitu is in very low spirits. Pitu thinks to himself, "Let them kill me . . . I'm never getting out of this place anyway" (page 101). Do you think Pitu will give up on trying to find his home and family, or do you think he will continue the search? Support your answer with evidence from the chapter.

Chapter 12: Stolen

- What are some of the things from home that Pitu misses?
- What were the consequences of Pitu neglecting his surroundings?

Chapter 13: Rescue

- Before reading the chapter, predict what you think will happen based on the chapter title. Explain how you arrived at your prediction.
- What thought led Pitu to a sudden burst of strength and energy?
- After reading the chapter, revisit your prediction. Was it correct or incorrect?

Chapter 14: The Shaman

- When Pitu wakes up, he is in the land of the dead. Why does the old man say Pitu ended up in the land of the dead?
- Pitu believes that Elders should be respected for their understanding, knowledge, strength, and patience. Taktuq believes that all people should be respected, especially Elders. Do you agree with Pitu or Taktuq? Do you feel that people should earn respect or that all people are deserving of respect?
- What is a *tuurngaq*? Who is Pitu's *tuurngaq*?

Chapter 15: Shame

- Why is Taktuq angry and easily upset? Use evidence from the chapter to support your answer.
- What happened to the people in Taktuq’s village after he entered the spirit world?
- What did Taktuq do to anger the spirits?
- At the end of the chapter, what does Pitu say to Taktuq?

Chapter 16: Teach

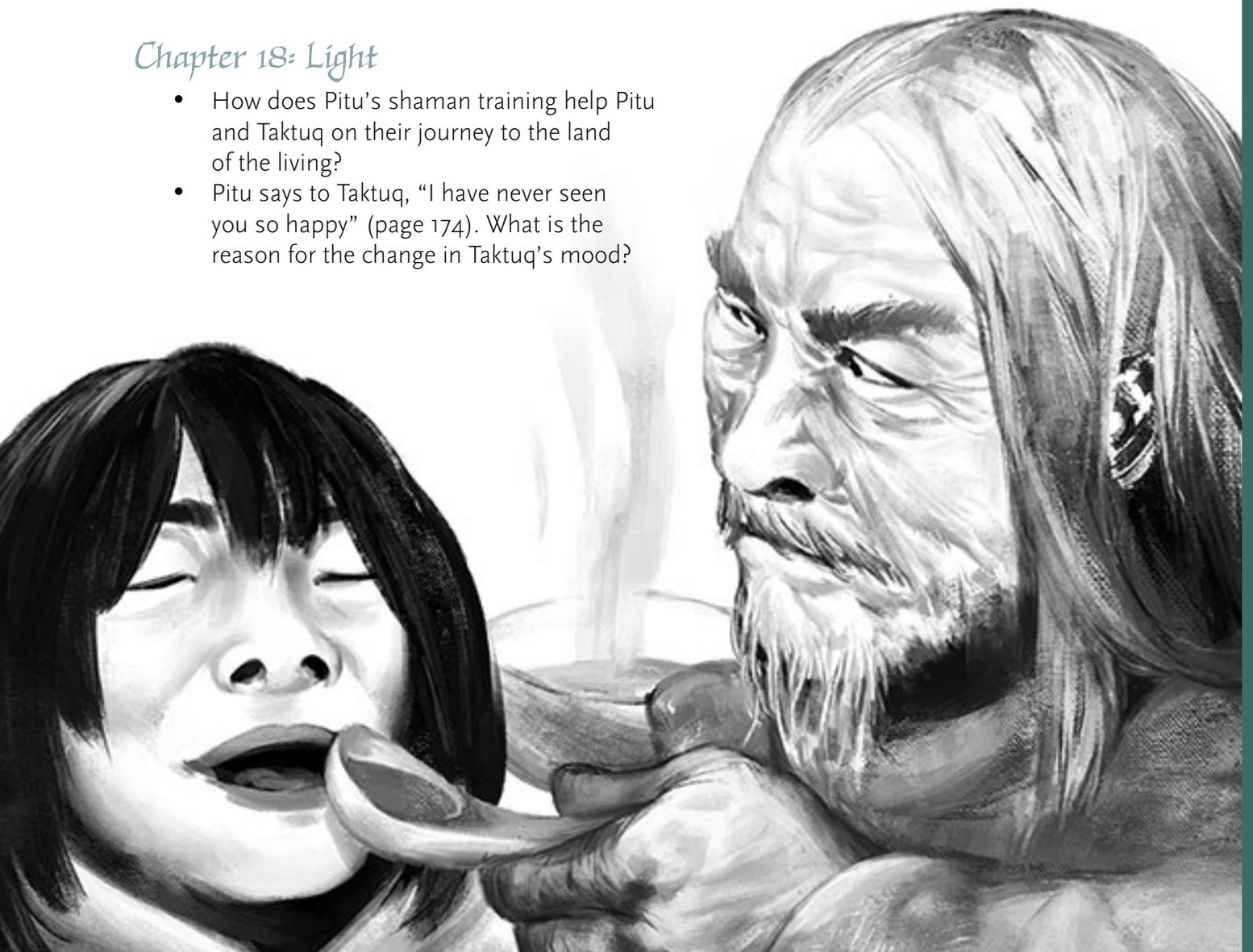
- Why does Taktuq decide to teach Pitu?
- What is Pitu able to see through his tuurngaq, Tiri?
- What are some of the skills that Taktuq teaches Pitu?
- Why does Pitu create a necklace out of fox bones?

Chapter 17: Hardship

- According to Pitu, what are the northern lights? What game do they play?
- Who does Pitu reunite with? How does Pitu react to this reunion?
- Why did Pitu’s family decide to hide the fact that he is a shaman?
- Who arrives to help Pitu and Taktuq?

Chapter 18: Light

- How does Pitu’s shaman training help Pitu and Taktuq on their journey to the land of the living?
- Pitu says to Taktuq, “I have never seen you so happy” (page 174). What is the reason for the change in Taktuq’s mood?



Chapter 19: Sacrifice

- Before reading the chapter, predict what you think will happen based on the chapter title. Explain how you arrived at your prediction.
- How does Pitu define “home”? What does “home” mean to you?
- What is revealed about the wolf? Why does the wolf pursue Pitu and not Taktuq?
- Briefly summarize the end of the chapter. What action does Taktuq take? Why did he do this?
- After reading the chapter, revisit your prediction. Was it correct or incorrect?

Chapter 20: Alive

- Pitu explains that he was “surrounded by people he had known his whole life, but could not recognize” (page 188). What do you think Pitu means by this?
- Who is Angugaattiaq? What sacrifice did Angugaattiaq make?
- What news does Saima tell Pitu? How does Pitu respond to this news?
- When Pitu sees the northern lights, who does he think of?

Additional Questions

- In *Those Who Run in the Sky*, Pitu overcomes numerous obstacles while attempting to return home to his village and loved ones. Can you think of a time when you had to overcome a hardship? What challenges did you face? How did you overcome those challenges?
- What do you think was the most significant obstacle that Pitu had to overcome?
- Choose three words or phrases to describe Pitu at the beginning of the story, and three words or phrases to describe Pitu at the end of the story. Then, write a paragraph describing how Pitu changed from the beginning to the end of the story.
- Does *Those Who Run in the Sky* remind you of another story you have read? If so, what was that story, and what connections can you make between the two stories?

Extension Activities

- Read students the following quotation from *Those Who Run in the Sky*:
“The landscape was summery, the tundra covered in moss and lichen. A caribou hide tent was propped in the middle of a gravelly area. The fox was skirting around the edge of the campground. Its coat was a spotty, dirty black colour to blend in with the black lichen-covered rocks, its eyes dark and focused in the direction that Pitu was watching from” (page 101).
Explain to students that this is an example of descriptive writing, where the author uses details to paint a picture with their words. Ask students to create a sketch, drawing, or painting of the setting described in the quotation. After students have created their artwork, you may facilitate a gallery walk for students to see how their peers interpreted the scene described in the quote. If possible, take your students on a walk to find a location in your community or city that closely resembles the setting described in the quotation.

- Students will write a diary entry from the perspective of Pitu about an important event from the story. Students should consider information they learned from the novel to help inform their writing. Remind students that when they are writing a diary entry, they are writing it from the first-person perspective, and should use phrases such as “I think” or “I feel.”
- Ask your students to pretend they are journalists who have an opportunity to interview the author of *Those Who Run in the Sky*, Aviaq Johnston. Ask students to create five interview questions they would like to ask Aviaq during the interview. They may ask questions about the characters or events in the story, Inuit culture, the process of writing a novel, or anything else they may be interested in learning. Encourage your students to ask open-ended questions that cannot simply be answered with “yes” or “no.” Encourage students to write more than five questions if they have many ideas.

